# MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

MARVEL

WARREN ELLIS

JIM CHEUNG

# PLUGGING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Last month we got up-close and personal with two of Marvel's brightest stars: writer Sean McKeever and artist John Cassaday. This month, we catch up with two more top talents, two of the biggest currently working in all of comics!

First on tap for this issue is an in-depth conversation with comic artist Jim Cheung about his life, his art, and his rise to fame behind the boards of the hit comic selected to lead Marvel into its next phase of popular success. And that phase has taken off like a rocket with his work on Young Avengers, which if you haven't started reading by now, I bet you will be after this issue of Spotlight!

We cover all the bases with Jim, and a few more, too, including a look back at Jim's first Marvel work ever in the pages of Marvel Comics Presents, plus a look behind the scenes in his character designs for Young Avengers!

Next, we talk turkey with Warren Ellis, catching up with the always edgy Brit who's taking the House of Ideas and burning it down- literally! The final storyline of the Ultimate Trilogy is coming your way in January, and Ultimate Extinction is a retelling of the legendary Galactus saga, done Ultimate-style! Another new project by Warren debuts this month as well, and it is Nextwave, the kind of book designed to blow up in your hands if you're not careful. Awwww....but what's the fun in being careful? Be prepared to put your eyes out with irreverent scripting by Warren and explosive artwork by Stuart Immonen. Heck, when you're done reading the first issue, pull the pin, count to five and toss it to your friend. Warren has jammed this comic with enough combustible material, they'll be in for quite a surprise!

We're not just looking forward with Warren, but looking back as well, with a recap and overview of his run on the mid-90s Excalibur title.

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Plus No Ads, No Muss, No Fuss!

But we do have Bullpen Bulletins! And check out the big surprise we have waiting for you on the Letters Page! We here at the Marvel Spotlight think it will get your "stamp" of approval!

See ya at the last page!

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# MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

## JIM CHEUNG - OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

**REAL NAME:** Jim Cheung
**KNOWN ALIASES:** Jimmy Cheung, Jimmy Chung
**OCCUPATION:** Comics artist
**PLACE OF BIRTH:** London, England
**YEAR OF BIRTH:** 1972
**WEBSITE:** No website currently online
**FIRST COMICS APPEARANCE:** Marvel Comics Presents #170

**HISTORY:** Jim Cheung's journey to prominence as a comics artist began in the United Kingdom, as a devoted fan of the comic art medium from his earliest years. He was born to immigrant parents from Hong Kong; Jim's father was born in China and raised by his relatives after both his parents were killed in World War II. Like so many who shared a similar traumatic experience, Jim's father's life was forever altered, and he was forced to begin working at the age of thirteen to support himself and the new family caring for him.

After meeting and marrying Jim's mother, the Cheungs moved from Hong Kong to England, where they made a new home in London. This is where Jim and his younger sister were born, and where his love for comics- and especially drawing comics- was nurtured. In the 1980s, the average Marvel Zombie was deep into Uncanny X-Men and Avengers, and Jim was no different, as he caught up with the legendary super-heroes and their adventures through the pages of various UK reprint books.

What separated Jim from other comics fans was his preoccupation with creating his own comic drawings and dabbling in comic art. Doodling in class or sketching on his school notebook while he should have been doing his homework, Jim's talents grew slowly into something more than just an idle hobby. At a very early age, Jim knew what he wanted to be- a comic book artist!

His dad eventually took his magnificent work ethic and set up his own restaurant enterprise, and young Jim was there with his sister to make sure tables were bussed and food was delivered. And in the down time, you can be sure Jim was catching up on his comic reading…and drawing!

Jim's persistence paid off, as his talents were eventually made known to the office of Marvel UK. The editors saw something special in this kid in his early 20s, and gave him a shot at crafting the visuals for some comics scripts. The humble kid from West London could have hardly been prepared for what came next: a shot at the big leagues with Marvel US! In a few short years, Jim had gone from taking foundational courses in a local college to drawing Iron Man and some of his favorite Avengers in the pages of Marvel Comics. But though he had a nice little gig penciling the pages of books like Force Works, Maverick and X-Force, it was still work delivered in relative obscurity, and in a personal artistic style that was very much under development.

After a stint at CrossGen starting in 1999-2000, the quality of his work took off to such a degree that Marvel couldn't wait to reintroduce this semi-veteran artist as one of their "Young Gun." He was brought back to take the artistic reins of Young Avengers, a key title that was launched in the wake of Avengers Disassembled. Jim is now settling into a career the trajectory of which is still on a very high pitch.

**SUPERHUMAN POWERS:** Splash pages, baby!!! Surrender to their might! You cannot resist! He'll also tell you he has a whole suite of secret agent abilities, like precision parachuting, expert marksmanship, and mastery of dozens of foreign languages. Don't believe him!

**THE JIM CHEUNG MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:**

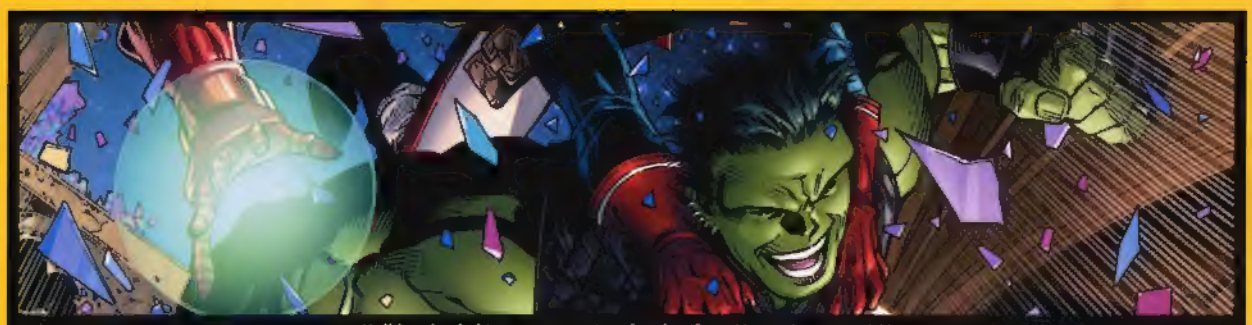
*Avengers Finale #1 (page 28-29, 2004)*
*Black Knight: Exodus (one shot, 1996)*
*Elektra: The Hand #1, 5 (2004)*
*Force Works #15-17 (1995)*
*Iron Man #322-323, 325-327, 329-330 (1995-1996)*
*Iron Man: The Legend #1 (1996)*
*Marvel Spotlight: Warren Ellis/Jim Cheung (2006)*
*Maverick #1-9, 11-12 (1997-1998)*
*Spider-Man Unlimited (Vol. 3) #6 (2005)*
*Uncanny X-Men #371 (1999)*
*X-Force #82-84, 86-88, 90, 94-95, 98-100, Ann. '99 (1998-2000)*
*X-Men Unlimited #14 (1997)*
*Young Avengers #1-6, 9-up (2005)*

**COVERS/PIN-UPS COLLECTION:**

Avengers: Ultron Unlimited (pin-up)
Battlezones: Dream Team 2 (pin-up)
Fantastic Four #525-526 (covers)
Fantastic Four: Foes #1-5 (covers)
Hulk: Unchained #1-3 (covers)
Maverick #10 (cover)
New Avengers #4 (variant cover)
Ultimate Nightmare #5 (cover)
What If Magneto Had Formed the X-Men With Professor X? (cover)
X-Force #85, 89, 92, 93, 96, 97 (covers)
XSE #2-4 (covers)

**COLLECT 'EM IN TRADE:**

Young Avengers Vol. 1: Sidekicks HC



Hulkling leads his teammates into battle. (from Young Avengers #1)

# THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH JIM CHEUNG

If you're reading this issue of Marvel Spotlight, you almost certainly have something in common with Jim Cheung: you love comics as much he does—and he loves them a lot! This guy is not only the man who's helped make Young Avengers one of the biggest new books in all of comics, he's also a genuine comic book nut like you and me! That makes him one fun guy to talk shop with!

Between Fed Ex snafus, a mild case of artist's block, Hurricane Wilma, and the rush to finish deadline sketches, Jim was kind of enough to sit with Marvel Spotlight for an in-depth interview about his family, his career, and Young Avengers, the book that's putting him and his talents on the map like nothing else before!

**SPOTLIGHT:** So you're a Brit, huh?

**JIM:** Yup. I grew up in Outer West London in the suburbs...pretty quiet.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Ahhh! The big city! Well...near the big city at least.

**JIM:** Yeah, only about 40 min away from the centre on the subway.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Did you take full advantage of proximity to London? That's an international city of the world, in case you didn't know!

**JIM:** Nah, probably not. It's a great place and I do miss living there, but once I started working, the trips into town weren't that frequent

**SPOTLIGHT:** When did you start reading comics?

**JIM:** I think around the age of five I became aware of them. One of the earliest comics I can remember is a Star Wars reprint. It was mainly weekly Marvel reprints I grew up with.

**SPOTLIGHT:** So was your "comics DNA" informed by the UK version of Marvel Comics, or did you get your hands on the American versions?

**JIM:** They were the US comics repackaged for the UK market. The only one available for a long time was Spider-Man, but later on they started reprinting X-Men and Fantastic Four. It was a little later that I discovered the U.S. books , and after that the UK reprints just weren't enough to feed my growing habit!

**SPOTLIGHT:** What did comics mean to you as a kid? Were they something you lived and died by? Or just another way to pass the time?

**JIM:** I'm not sure. I think there was something that just appealed to me about the colorful artwork, and the fact that the stories were entertaining didn't hurt either. The artwork just resonated with me and inspired me to try to mimic my favorite artists. I was able to distinguish between the artists pretty early on and really tried to dissect the styles...well, as much as I could at that age!

**SPOTLIGHT:** So when did you first pick up a pencil and start investing time in drawing as a hobby? When did you say to yourself "Hey, I really like this drawing thing and I'm going to keep doing it?"

**JIM:** I think from that early age I knew that this was the road I would try to travel, and I even told a school teacher—Miss Griffiths—that very early on. I had just completed an illustrated story about the X-Men when the teacher asked me. I wish I still had that exercise book. It'd be fun to look back at now. Everyone one else in the class would be talking about being firemen or pilots, but I kinda already knew.

I just liked to draw in general, but I think it might've been the fact that a few simple lines can represent a face really made it seem that much easier for a kid. I didn't have to worry about modeling or shading. The image was right there in the few pencils strokes.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Miss Griffiths, huh? Did she ever catch you doodling in class and rap you on the knuckles with a ruler?

**JIM:** I was always drawing in class. Probably the reason why I didn't do as well as I could've in high school! I still remember her pretty well. She could be strict at times!

**SPOTLIGHT:** What did your classmates- future firemen and pilots all- think of your dedication to the idea of being "an artist!"

**JIM:** I can't recall exactly, but I think my classmates thought it was cool. Definitely something different, anyway.

**SPOTLIGHT:** And your parents? Did they hassle you about daydreaming with your comics collections and your drawing habits?

**JIM:** No, they were incredibly supportive. I guess they were just happy I was staying out of trouble. My mum did like to slip a few books into the trash whenever she was able. I would always wonder "where did I leave that book again?" and my mum'd pretend she didn't hear! But that was before I started collecting them more seriously. After that I just made sure they didn't clutter up the place.

**SPOTLIGHT:** What was your home life like at this time?

**JIM:** My parents opened up their own Chinese restaurant when I was still in high school, so my sister and I were pretty much left to fend for ourselves

Iron Lad shows off his repulsor ray. (from YA #1)

as they'd be working all day and night. It was certainly a strain on the family, but it was a dream of my dad's so I'm glad he was able to make it happen. On the weekends, my sister and I would venture there and help out. It was boring as hell when things were quiet during the day, but it would be crazy during Saturday evenings. I kinda enjoyed helping out during those times- taking care of the dishes, serving up the food. Typical stuff in family restaurants, y'know?

I helped out even after I started working for Marvel, but by the time my work increased they had sold it, and my Dad went off to work as the head chef somewhere nearer the centre of London.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Is your pops still cooking?

**JIM:** He's just retired, so he's looking after my mum. I think his nature, just like mine, is to work, so I think he's getting a little stir crazy. I know he's certainly driving my mum a little crazy!

**SPOTLIGHT:** So lay it on the line here- the favorite artists...the favorite titles... What were the comics that had you running to the store or searching for back issues?

**JIM:** There are just so many to list. The main ones are probably John Byrne on FF and X-Men, John Romita Jr. on Spider-Man and X-Men, Rick Leonardi on SpiderMan, Paul Smith on X-Men (my first U.S. X-Men book was #175, his last issue), Alan Davis on Captain Britain and Batman and The Outsiders, Arthur Adams on New Mutants, Bill Sienkiewicz on New Mutants, and I'm sure there are plenty I'm forgetting right now. Let's just say, I never had much money left after getting my comics.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Did you carry on reading comics in your college years? Was this a habit that abided with you?

**JIM:** Yes, I've never really stopped reading comics since that young age. I think that once I had made up my mind to work in comics, I tried to learn as much as I could about breaking in, going as far as buying books on the subject. I read How to Draw and Sell Comic Strips for Newspapers and Comic Books by Alan McKenzie. There weren't many resources like that out at the time, so it was definitely a help.

I thought that by learning as much as I could about it, I could be prepared... but, I was wrong!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Oh, really? You mean you weren't a perfectly formed artist right from day one?!?!? What did you do to prepare yourself to become a full-fledged comics artist?

**JIM:** I think from that time in class I knew that was what I wanted to do. I knew I had a modicum of skill and the interest was certainly there, so... There wasn't a real science to it or anything. I just read the books and kinda examined the art, trying to look at why something looked good and why certain things worked better (in my eyes) than others. I should've paid more attention to the work behind the eye candy of comics art, I guess, but at a young age, it's all about the eye candy.

**SPOTLIGHT:** You went to an art school. What became of the training you got in that setting?

**JIM:** Well, there wasn't any real training at all. The course I took just allowed us to experiment with different mediums. At the end of the course was when you had to specialize and the real work would begin. By then I kinda knew that it wasn't for me and I wanted to try my hand in comics proper. The most I got from the course were the life drawing classes, which did help a lot.

# JIM CHEUNG THROUGH THE 90s

**X-Force #92**
**Jim was lead penciler on X-Force for nearly two years, from 1998-2000**

**Maverick #4**
**Maverick was another title that developed under Jim's artistry. He launched the title with its first issue and worked on it for a whole year.**

**SPOTLIGHT:** What was your first step? Build up a portfolio?

**JIM:** Yes, the first step I knew was building a portfolio, but it was pretty crude. I just followed what I had read about, providing some penciled pages and some inked pages, but I had no script to work from so I had to just make something silly up.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Oooh...we like silly! What kind of drawings did you put together for your pitch?

**JIM:** The sample I put together was Bishop encountering the Hulk in a cave, with the conclusion being Bishop beaten to a bloody pulp. But not really, it just turns out to be a simple Danger Room sequence, although it might've been more interesting to have run with the bloody pulp idea. Exciting stuff, eh? I'm hoping to expand this idea to a 12 issue mini series at some point.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Call it "House of Jim." It'll be the Comics Event of the Year!!! So, at this early stage of your professional comics life—in the early 1990s—did you have any comics biz contacts?

**JIM:** No, I didn't have any contacts, so I wasn't able to ask anyone. The only people I knew were the guys at the comic shop!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Wait a second...you went places because of the guys at your comic shop?

**JIM:** Yeah, the comic shop guys, Cliff Sweeney and Giovanni Tarquini, they knew someone at Marvel UK who frequented the shop, so they passed on my sample package to him, and that was how it all started.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Dang...that's one heck of a "pull list." They got your samples in front of a Marvel UK rep. Good for them!

**JIM:** Yes, the shop is called Comic Showcase in Central London (free plug there), although the guys didn't own it. Sweeney and Tarquini were just the cool cats that ran the store. It was a case of good timing, I guess. Marvel UK were looking to expand at the time, and I was fortunate enough to have been in the right place at the right time.

**SPOTLIGHT:** That's really nice how that turned out for you!

**JIM:** Yeah, it might be interesting, although those guys have since left the store. I did bump into Giovanni at San Diego one year, but our meeting was real brief. He went back to Italy and opened up his own store, I think.

Patriot, Hulkling and Asgardian square off against Kang. (from YA #5)

**SPOTLIGHT:** Now there is a plug! If you're ever in Italy, go buy your comics from Giovanni Tarquini, the guy who helped discover Jim Cheung!

**JIM:** Well, I'd expect a cut of the action, then!

**SPOTLIGHT:** So these guys at the Comic Showcase store in London help expedite your samples to Marvel UK. What happened next?

**JIM:** I think it may have been within a week that I got the call from the editor, Bambos Georgiou. He was a cool cat, too...a big Elvis fan, as I recall!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Within a week, huh? Did you get the feeling things were moving REALLY fast?

**JIM:** Well, to be honest, I left the package at the comic shop and kinda forgot about it. It might've been about a week from the time that the package reached Marvel that they called me. I went in for an interview with a bigger portfolio a few days later. It was kinda loose though with very little comics related stuff- things from the art course mainly. There really wasn't any sequential stuff other that the four page sample I did. Not ideal, but I guess they were desperate so I got a job!

**SPOTLIGHT:** How old were you when your first published work hit the stands?

**JIM:** I was 21, I think, when I first started getting stuff published. The first

The Growing Man attacks in this image drawn from one of Jim's excellent splash page compositions. (from YA #3)

title might've been some cover or another. I don't recall off the top of my head. I did a number of things before anything got printed. The mini-series I was hired for never got published, due to cutbacks (ironic, huh?), but I was able to get a few scraps here and there before Marvel UK stopped originating material. It was just a few covers for the reprints they started up again. That was when I was pretty much back to square one again.

**SPOTLIGHT:** And "square two" was in America, wasn't it? With Marvel USA?

**JIM:** Yup. Luckily I had made friends with Andy Lanning who, along with Dan Abnett, helped me get my first proper gig with Marvel US. They wrote the Marvel UK mini-series I was drawing, and coincidentally enough they were writing the Force Works series when Marvel UK closed shop.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Now, in looking over your print history, it appears that your first Marvel work was Force Works...is that right?

**JIM:** Force Works was the first proper series. The first US work I got was a story in Marvel Comics Presents, starring Red Wolf. (Now that's a character waiting for a relaunch!) Everyone with MUK pretty much got the same deal. After that little gig things went quiet for some reason.

**SPOTLIGHT:** And what was this reason?

**JIM:** I was just kinda lost, I guess. I didn't really know too many people, and the guide book I had didn't really tell me what to do after I had broken in. I tried hitting the only con there was in the UK, but that didn't really bear any fruit. I'd get a decent response but no work came out of it. It was through Andy Lanning's help on a trip to New York that I got the little boost and the gigs on Force Works and eventually Iron Man.

**SPOTLIGHT:** In the early-to-mid 90s, you were a 22-23 year old kid, really, and here you were illustrating Force Works, a title in the Marvel Comics stable, and soon to move on to Iron Man. How did that sink in? Or did it sink in?

**JIM:** It was definitely cool to be working for Marvel US. It was certainly a childhood dream realized, and I knew there was much to learn. Of course I thought the stuff I was doing was the bee's knees, and it was certainly to the best of my ability back then, but I knew there was a long way to go. Paul Neary—who was the editor-in-chief at Marvel UK— told me when I started that I wouldn't find my style until my late 20s-30s and he's proven to be absolutely right. Of course, there's still some way to go yet ( I hope). I definitely knew that the work I did at that point would count towards either a future in comics or a future washing dishes at my parents' restaurant.

**SPOTLIGHT:** So here's the hard question: looking back at your work from that period, how do you think the material stands up? In what regard do you hold it today?

**JIM:** The work definitely has some value, but more for nostalgia than anything else. It's bad but not dreadful, so I'm not completely embarrassed by it. I kinda regard them like past haircuts...you try not to repeat the same mistakes. Learn from the experience and move on and hopefully up. If you get my drift...!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Comparing your work ten years ago on Force Works and Iron Man with your current output on Young Avengers, which features some of the same characters...that is quite a difference, wouldn't you say? You said Paul Neary was right about not finding yourself until later in your professional career. In what substantive way was his wisdom accurate? What are you doing now that you weren't doing then?

**JIM:** Things like my art style wasn't mature yet; that there would be a learning curve to go through with the techniques and styles I used. I was a bit of a schizophrenic artist back then with multiple art styles appearing on the same page. I didn't really have any particular approach to the work because I didn't have the experience. I would put down whatever popped into my head when I read the script and didn't really worry about storytelling and flow, unlike today where almost everything gets scrutinized before I hand the page to the inker.

Cassie Lang, aka "Ant-Girl"

**SPOTLIGHT:** You were in the midst of a particularly stylized period of comics art in the early 90s.

**JIM:** Yes, the Image guys were on their way to forming.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Did you feel a part of that period, the tone of it?

**JIM:** Not really. I knew that they were on a different level. I loved the Jim Lee X-Men issues, as some very worn copies would testify, but there was just a world between results. I had barely broken in at the time. I knew that the big expansion in the industry was the only reason why I got that first gig, but when that gig was over was when things started slowing.

**SPOTLIGHT:** How did you make it through the post-expansion, implosion years? Were you able to support yourself on comics earnings?

**JIM:** Yes, I was able to keep going in comics due to very little expenditure. I helped out my parents on the weekends, too, although I never asked for money from them. I managed to get fairly regular work after a while from Marvel, so that helped me get by. Not enough to buy a Porsche, but certainly enough to continue buying comics!

**SPOTLIGHT:** I'm the same way...for me, it's a question of buying a Lexus or keeping up with my monthly comics and collected editions fix. But I do think you deserve a Porsche for your work on Young Avengers. Start budgeting, dude!

**JIM:** YES! ...sigh...It's still a dream I'm chasing.

**SPOTLIGHT:** In the years since, you established yourself as a working Marvel artist, with long runs in both X-Force and Maverick. You've only recently begun burnishing your superstar credentials, however, with your time at CrossGen and now Young Avengers, and being labeled one of

Marvel's "Young Guns." (Pretty neat trick for a guy who's been around for ten years!)

**JIM:** Yeah, the Young Guns label was cool. For myself and David Finch! It was certainly appreciated that Marvel would promote me that way—or any way, in fact. That there is interest in my work still surprises me and gives me a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. All I ever really wanted to do was to draw comics to the best of my ability, and I am always thankful that I continue to be given the opportunity to do so.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Speaking of CrossGen...was that place a cult? You know...like drinking blood from goblets, wearing long cloaks and shadow meetings and stuff. People want to know!

**JIM:** *(Laughter)* With Mark Alessi as the leader?

**SPOTLIGHT:** See, I don't know! This is a hard-hitting interview. You cannot evade my questions. People want to know!

**JIM:** Well, I hope not...but maybe I was completely brain washed. There was always a low humming throughout the building. Maybe it was subliminal messages being transmitted while we were working in the studio! Could be why I was always drawn to spending huge amounts of time in there. But there was no Kool-Aid served there!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Did you feel your time at CrossGen really helped elevate your status as a more respected comics artist?

**JIM:** I'm not sure about that, but it certainly helped me to learn a lot. Going from working at home in solitude to working in a large studio with two dozen other creators certainly opened up my eyes a lot to a lot of other techniques. In that respect, it was a shame it didn't last longer, because there is still so much I have to learn.

**SPOTLIGHT:** So let me ask you this: when did you feel like you had "arrived" as a comics artist?

**JIM:** I don't really think I've "arrived" yet. Maybe ask me that again in ten years...

**SPOTLIGHT:** That's a good point of view...you sound like a pretty grounded guy. Is that part of the work ethic implanted by Ma and Pa Cheung?

**JIM:** Heh...There's actually a small valve in the side of my head to deflate it when it gets too big. But really, I guess the work ethic thing might just be desperation not to be fired, and to ensure I continue to get work.

**SPOTLIGHT:** I don't think you have to worry about that now. Your work on Young Avengers is really turning some heads.

**JIM:** Thanks! I'm trying.

**SPOTLIGHT:** So let's talk about Young Avengers, the comic that is really elevating you and your work into the upper reaches of Mighty Marveldom. When were you approached to work on it? Before or after Allan Heinberg was taken on as writer?

**JIM:** I think the premise was already in place when I was asked. They gave me a vague idea of the book when they were trying to arrange a project for me to do. At the time, I was doing Lady Death at CrossGen. When everything ceased to be, I was told about the YA project. Other than that I was just doing some covers for Marvel, some Elektra stories, and the Spider-Man Unlimited story.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Were you familiar at the time with what was going on with the "disassembling" of the longtime Avengers team? What did you think of the premise when you first heard it?

Jim's dynamic cover to Young Avengers #1.

Billy Kaplan, aka Asgardian, lets loose some electric magic! (from YA #6)

**JIM:** I wasn't following the Avengers line at the time, and only knew what I had read on the internet. The idea was a surprise in some ways because I had always liked the Avengers and didn't really think it needed that much of a shake up. But I'm kinda old school that way, as I grew up with them. When I heard that YA was spinning off of the re-launch, I thought that it was going to be fun to be part of it all.

**SPOTLIGHT:** But at the same time, was there anything in the pitch that you heard that prepared you for how inventive YA was going to be—how different it was going to be from Avengers?

**JIM:** I had no idea.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Many comics fans, with the initial shreds of information, forecast YA as just an Avengers copy with teenage kids. Of course, it's clearly not that.

**JIM:** Yeah. That's how I initially pictured it, too. CB Cebulski thought that I would be a good match for the book and since he had a better idea of what it was all about than I did, I thought I'd run with it. I honestly wasn't sure if it would be a great idea, but I figured I'd trust Marvel's experience on the matter.

**SPOTLIGHT:** That's interesting, because the writer on the book—Allan Heinberg—had no experience writing comics before! What was it like helping him get his feet wet in a new writing medium?

**JIM:** It was a learning experience for both of us, I think. Whenever I start a new book with a new writer, it always takes me a couple of issues to adjust to the new writing style, so in that respect, Allan was learning what I could do and vice versa. I do think he's certainly come a long way since that first issue though. He's totally grasped the comics process and is now writing like a comics veteran.

**SPOTLIGHT:** The conceit that opens the book is well-crafted: journalists J. Jonah James and Jessica Jones (do all journalists in the Marvel Universe have alliterative "J" names?) discuss the newly emerged "Young Avengers" team of super-powered teenagers. Iron Man and Captain America show up to provide context for the old Avengers, as well as a nemesis for the kids. Up to that point, you only get brief glimpse of the team through newspaper clippings and flashbacks.

And then, finally, on page 12, we meet the title characters for the first time, where they literally make quite a "splash" crashing through the stained glass window in the church!

**JIM:** Yeah, I liked the way the story started off, too. I don't like that page 12 now, though. I think I could probably do better.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Bah! That was really a born-burning page, dude! What would you do differently?

**JIM:** Thanks! But perhaps I'd just change up some of the poses and maybe the camera angle...put more thought into the design for sure. I would've preferred to not show the kids until that moment but the first few pages with the flashbacks were already set.

**SPOTLIGHT:** I notice that in your layout compositions, you have no hesitation to orient the horizon at a steep angular pitch, and a neat device you use many times is to have the characters exploding out of a corner of the page.

**JIM:** Yes, but only when I feel it warrants it; and when I need to fit all the characters in, too! I like to guide the reader through the page as much as I can; get a nice flow and rhythm across. I can go absolutely nuts drawing a team book with a bunch of secondary characters—it isn't always a lot of fun, especially when everyone has something to say and do in every panel. That's when I take a little liberty and edit out what I can't fit in. It's not ideal but the amount of space on a page is limited and sometimes, there are some panels that need the emphasis so I have to shuffle the other panels a little to make the overall page work.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Does that require a kickback to Allan for the chance to re-imagine his dialogue?

**JIM:** I do try to call Allan and let him know of any changes whenever I can so that it isn't a complete surprise to him. I'd never want him or any writer to think that I'm running wild on the book. I actually try to keep the dialogue intact as much as I can. If there's dialogue for one person, I make sure he or she is visible whenever I can. Occasionally it works to have the dialogue be off panel too. But on occasion I do forget. There have been a couple of instances where that's happened, and Allan's been generous enough to make the adjustments so that they aren't as noticeable.

**SPOTLIGHT:** While you mention the possibility that your collaborators could think you're "running wild" (whether you are or you're not), have there been moments of friction in your career with any collaborators? And if so, is that a natural component of most working relationships anyway?

**JIM:** There have been moments, but it's natural I think. We all spend an inordinate amount of time working on these books, trying to make the best product we can. It's hard to separate yourself from it sometimes, because at the end of the day what's produced is what's going to be around for a long time, especially with trade collections.

I'd also probably not be interested in working with someone who isn't willing to give their best effort when I'm trying to on each and every page.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Back to YA, one thing that knocks me out is the coloring...it really adds an incredible amount of dimensional depth to your pencils.

**JIM:** Yes, the colors play a very important part in the comic. In fact, their importance has increased more and more in recent years.

**SPOTLIGHT:** That scene at the end of YA #1, when the kids are in the garden of the Avengers Mansion, the scene seems to shimmer off the page. Those kinds of effects were impossible back in the four-color days.

"Iron Lad" has to make his case in front of some intimidating company: Captain America, Iron Man, and Jessica Jones! (from YA #2)

**JIM:** Yes, it's certainly the age of computers now. With the advancements in art programs, you don't even need to pick up a paintbrush to achieve the same results.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Are you familiar with how those programs work? And do you see those possibilities when you're working on pages at your drawing board?

**JIM:** A little. That was one of the benefits to working at CrossGen. I was able to observe how the other processes worked. I managed to pick up some rudimentary knowledge on most of what inkers and colorists do. And I absolutely see the finished product sometimes when I'm drawing. The great thing about working with John Dell and Justin Ponsor is that I know what they're capable of since they were both at CG with me. I often adjust my penciling style to accommodate the inker so that I get the best results possible. With Justin, I sometimes have an idea of how I'd like the colors to look, and he is often able to exceed my expectations when it's all completed.

Just because they're kids doesn't make them shy of a fight. Patriot leads his friends into battle! (from YA #6)

I was fortunate to have them on the book and I certainly wouldn't have been able to pull off some of the things we did with anyone else. I have Marvel to thank for putting the team together.

**SPOTLIGHT:** YA must be a demanding job for a colorist. Much of the action takes place in dark places- the burned out Avengers Mansion, for instance, and the showdown with Kang on the darkened streets of New York City at nighttime. The bristling light sources from Asgardian's powers or Iron Lad/Kang's suit really provides a nifty light source for you to use in these scenes.

**JIM:** Justin has an amazing eye for color. He and I both have similar color sensibilities (or at least I like to think so), and the results are often pretty close to what I'd aim for if I were able to color myself.

**SPOTLIGHT:** You had a lot on your plate with that first issue: render J. Jonah Jameson, Jessica Jones, Captain America, and Iron Man in key supporting roles, and launch four new costumed heroes, plus throw in a battle royale in a church cathedral with a huge party of people....whew! How do you feel #1 stands up now that you're further into the series?

**JIM:** I'd like to redraw the entire issue!

**SPOTLIGHT:** NO! You can't say that! Your fans won't let you get away with that!

**JIM:** Well, there are just so many things I'd do differently now. I'm sure Allan would like to rewrite it also. But it was great that the book was so well received. I think both Allan and I were very pleasantly surprised.

**SPOTLIGHT:** I was amazed that a lot of old-school Avengers fans- even ones who might not have liked what was going on in Disassembled- embraced YA, despite advance concerns about what the heck a book titled Young Avengers would be like.

**JIM:** Yes, it was great that the book was so well received. I think both Allan and I were very pleasantly surprised. I think there were a few borderline

reviews but that's to be expected. Can't win 'em all, as much as I'd like...

**SPOTLIGHT:** One thing you have really delivered a knock-out punch with in the pages of Young Avengers are your splash pages. Done well, those dramatic one and two-page extravaganzas can really set the tone for a book...and you do them well!

**JIM:** They're all blood, sweat and tears. Mostly tears with a couple drops of blood! And I think Allan totally picks the right moments to use splash pages.

**SPOTLIGHT:** There are a couple splash pages that could have been used as covers. For instance, the Vision splash from YA #2, which is our first appearance of the Vision after his "disassembly."

**JIM:** Yes, that was one I jotted down pretty quickly I think. I didn't want anything too dramatic camera-wise, since it was just a flashback.

**SPOTLIGHT:** How about the Growing Man splash from YA #3? Back in the day, that bad boy would have been the front cover! Remember when they used to have covers that directly referred to the insides of the issue? Even had (gasp!) dialogue!!!

**JIM:** Yeah, it's something I like to do whenever I can with covers- to include elements from the actual issue, which is why I always try to find out what happens in the interiors. Oftentimes though, I have to avoid the plot elements for cover display. Otherwise it'd just spoil the issues prior. That's the problem with doing covers in advance.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Especially with solicits and press releases getting covers out in advance.

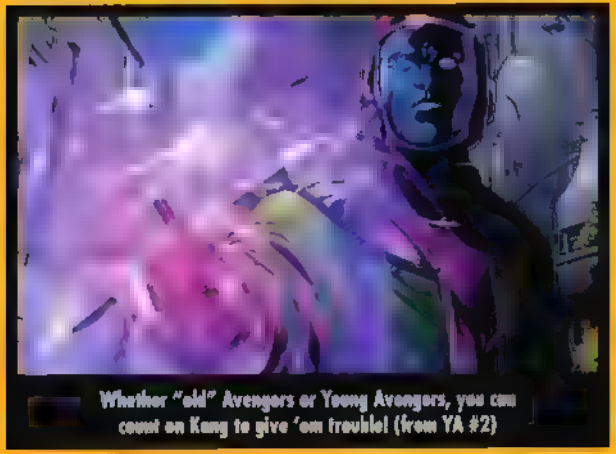
**JIM:** Yes, the internet has changed the way a lot of things are run in the industry.

**SPOTLIGHT:** The first six issues of Young Avengers told its own self-contained story. By the time fans are reading this, your next storyline will have begun developing. At this point in the very early history of Young Avengers, are you pretty happy with what you've accomplished?

**JIM:** Certainly. The initial arc let us get comfortable with the whole premise and let us know that the book overall was a viable concept...and it definitely let us all understand the characters so that we can direct them with much more ease. Like any book, the more time you spend on it, the better it'll become; or at least I try to think so. It was that way on every series I worked on previously from Iron Man to X-Force to Scion.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Speaking of Iron Man, did you have deja vu revisiting the old Teen Tony days with your depiction of Iron Lad?

**JIM:** Yeah, the similarities didn't escape me



Whether "old" Avengers or Young Avengers, you can count on Kang to give 'em trouble! (from YA #2)

**SPOTLIGHT:** How about that Teen Tony? You know, one only hears of that era in Iron Man history spoken of in hushed whispers...

**JIM:** And they should be silenced! Dark times, very dark times...

**SPOTLIGHT:** I'm thinking a Teen Tony TPB, perhaps a Masterworks volume...reprinting all the classics. What say you?

**JIM:** It'll be the first trade to get negative orders. I'll pay money to have that not be reprinted!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Seriously, with Young Avengers and "Iron Lad," you got the chance to call "do over" on Teen Tony. And I have to say, the rendering of the "Kid Kang" that you, inker John Dell, and colorist Justin Ponsor turned in is nothing short of brilliant The shining light glinting off his armor, the explosive brightness of his power blasts...that's good comics, man!

**JIM:** Thanks. I made sure he got all the metal polish in the shop. Cap didn't even get any for his shield.

**SPOTLIGHT:** In another section of Marvel Spotlight, we'll be discussing your character designs for the core team. But for now, I'd like to talk more about Iron Lad/Kang. Secret identities were an important surprise element of YA as the story unfolded. We didn't find out until the last page of #1 who "Iron Lad" really was. Who came up with the idea that young Kang would adopt the Iron Man armor?

**JIM:** I think it might've been Allan. It was part of his initial pitch I think.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Did you mix and match from past Iron Man armor suits to make your own? I note that yours is really lean and stripped down.

**JIM:** Yes, and I tried to do that with all the characters. I wanted to keep all the characters fairly slim to keep that youthful appearance. Too bulky, and they age immediately.

**SPOTLIGHT:** And, of course, the kid's armor is "neuro-kinetic," which means he can manipulate its form with a thought. that is fun for you to draw, I'm sure...

**JIM:** It can be fun, as long as I know what it is I'm doing.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Does Kang pop up in the next story arc?

**JIM:** No, he's done for now. It's all about Hulkling. I have no clue when or if Kang comes back. There are no plans for him currently that I know of.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Darn! I liked Kang. I mean...well, that sounds weird to say that, doesn't it?

Well, Kang or not, there are lots of fans who are pretty well focused now on your brilliant work in Young Avengers! Thanks for taking time out of your very busy schedule to talk with Spotlight readers!

*Jim Cheung is currently knocking out page after page of Young Avengers for your Marvel Comics reading pleasure. Reserve your copy now!*

# YOUNG AVENGERS: FROM SIDEKICKS TO SUPER HEROES

The first issue of Young Avengers premiered a handful of new characters into the Marvel Universe, and it fell on Jim Cheung to bring them to life. Defining the visual persona of one new character is challenging enough, designing the look for a whole team of costumed youngsters is even tougher! Part of his challenge was to meld the look of certain iconic Avengers like Iron Man, Captain America and Hulk with the youthful flair that 21st century superhero-worshipping kids would naturally put into their costumes. And increasing the difficulty of this challenge was the unique nature of Heinberg's plot: Jim had to develop a whole new set of costumes for the second YA storyline, since the kids were forced out of their first costumes by Captain America at the end of the first arc!

This feature will showcase all the Young Avengers in their first and second costumes, as Jim walks us through the thinking that took these kids from his sketch pad to the spinner rack, and left him in total exhaustion!

Billy Kaplan's costume design as Wiccan

## ASGARDIAN/WICCAN

**SPOTLIGHT:** Billy Kaplan's influence when creating his superhero look was Thor. What elements did you make sure you wanted to use for his character design?

**JIM:** I just looked at the classic Thor outfit and went from there. Y'know, I can't remember if the staff was my idea or not; it wasn't in the very first image, so I think I might've added that myself. I do know I did add the mysterious bag though: it carried his homework!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Perfect! (I'm sure it's anointed with some sort of spell to keep dogs away from it!) At the time you worked up Asgardian's look, did you know that he would later transform himself into Wiccan? The staff- which stood in for Thor's hammer- has a sort of "witchy" vibe attached to it...obviously that was a keeper?

**JIM:** I think the original idea was that everyone would have new outfits and identities after the first arc. That's when they could shed their sidekick images and come into their own identities. With the new outfits, I didn't want to put out something drastically different since the characters are so new. A radical redesign would've turned readers off I thought, so I tried to keep a similar feel across the board. So I just shed a few of the Thor elements.

**SPOTLIGHT:** And the staff as well?

**JIM:** The staff was just a visual conduit for his powers, and since we kinda showed that it wasn't necessary, it was taken out. Oh, and his homework is now taken care of before he does his super-heroing, so he doesn't have to carry it around.

**SPOTLIGHT:** That's good...you know, kids really should take care of their homework as soon as they get home from school. BEFORE going out with friends, chatting on instant message, or beating up super-villains from future timelines!

Asgardian from Young Avengers #2

Jim's sketch of Teddy Altman's new look.

# HULKLING

**SPOTLIGHT:** The big secret with Teddy Altman's appearance is that he's a shape-shifter, not exactly a "Hulk" look-alike! Why is he so fond of the misbegotten beast the Incredible Hulk, then, to choose that appearance?

**JIM:** I guess the Hulk is his favorite? I have no clue. I just do what I'm told, man!

**SPOTLIGHT:** Can he adapt his body into any shape, or form, or size? Or are there limits to what he can do?

**JIM:** I think there are limits. We'll be learning much more about Hulkling in the story arc beginning with YA #9, including his origin. Hopefully the solicits won't spoil too much.

**SPOTLIGHT:** At least when you had the chance to design his character, you didn't give him purple pants that ripped at the knees.

**JIM:** That's his new outfit at the end of this next arc. Darn! I'll need to talk to Allan about changing that now.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Oh...well, if it's a trade secret, then we'll leave it out of Spotlight. The only way it would make it to print is if it were some kind of editing faux pas. I wouldn't want to ruin your big reveal of Hulkling's purple pants!

**JIM.** Ok. Cool. Keep it between ourselves, then.

The shape-shifter in action, from Young Avengers #5

# KATE BISHOP

**SPOTLIGHT:** Kate Bishop must have been the most fun to design, as she's a new character with no obvious reference to the past. Did you get to build her from the ground up?

**JIM:** Not exactly. She had very specific elements that were necessary to her character. They're probably less important now but there was a 'goal' I was aiming for with her.

**SPOTLIGHT:** How so?

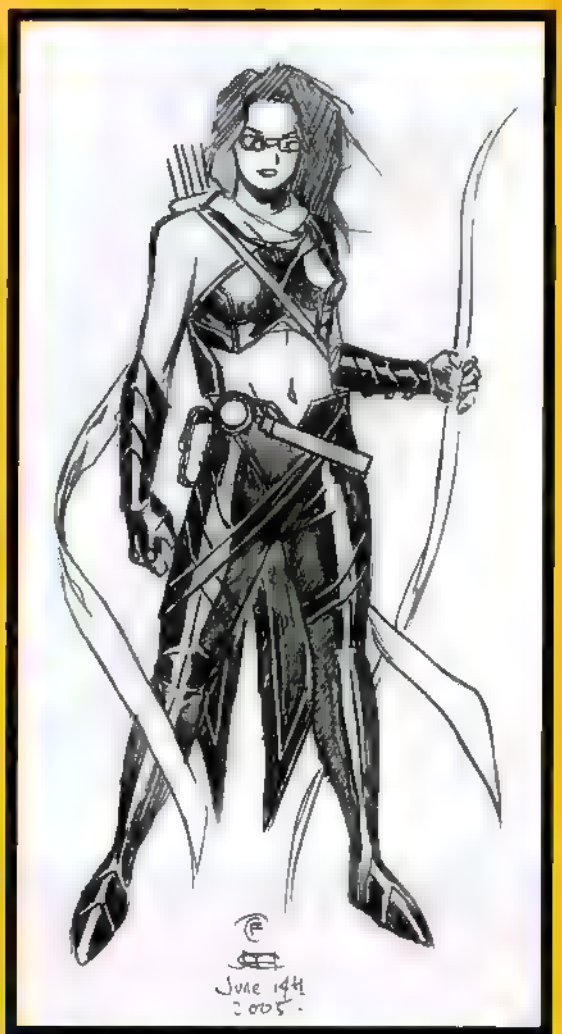
**JIM:** It was part of the story: she needed to scour the mansion for weapons to fight Kang with, and since she's adept with swords and bow, it's only natural she took those weapons. The other pieces just happened to be right there. Though in hindsight, some kind of gun would've been useful, too!

**SPOTLIGHT:** She looks great...a very commanding character design. You interpolate her obvious femininity with the bow and arrow, sword and hilt. Nice stuff!

**JIM:** Thanks! I like the way Kate Bishop has turned out.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Of course, now she's got the stylish shades, huh? And her new design appears to have dropped the elegantly ripped up evening gown look!

**JIM:** Sadly, the dress isn't practical for all occasions. The girl's gotta look the part of a superheroine. It wouldn't do to be seen in a ripped up dress all the time. Not for the superhero circle. The Hulk, maybe, but not Kate.




Jim's sketch of the little rich girl who can swing a broadsword with the best of 'em!

Wonder-Woman? Task-Mistress? Hawkinghird?!?! No...it's Kate Bishop, thank you very much!

# PATRIOT

**JIM:** Patriot was a bit of a pain to design.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Naturally, his secret identity is a big reveal, which I'm sure increased the "pain," huh?

**JIM:** A little. He took awhile to agree on, that's for sure.

**SPOTLIGHT:** What were some of the elements of disagreement?

**JIM:** There were a lot of ideas that weren't right for the character. My main goal when I designed the initial characters was to make them look like natural partners for their senior counterparts, and the early designs for Patriot just didn't seem to make the grade with Allan, Tom Brevoort, or Joe Quesada. They were kind enough to provide me with plenty of feedback, but it still took a good while before everyone agreed. Ultimately they wanted something more reminiscent of Bucky than Cap, as it would have more emotional impact when the characters finally met, so that was the direction I ended up going in.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Anybody who wants to check out those rejected sketches of Patriot can check out the bonus materials in Young Avengers #1 Director's Cut. Jim, the original design had Patriot covered from head to toe by his costume. The new outfit, as designed in the comics by Kate Bishop, takes away the head-covering mask. The kid can show his face now!

**JIM:** That was actually conceived back in the beginning, but was obviously rejected. Allan liked it, though, which is why we use it now.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Nice! I'm assuming he's not slinging his shield around now, is he? It's not a circle shape like Cap's, so it won't fling very well, will it?

**JIM:** Patriot's shield is more for defense. I don't think that thing would bounce back no matter which way you threw it!

The young super-soldier's new costume.

Patriot launches himself into action in the pages of YA #5.

# CASSIE LANG/ ANT-GIRL/STATURE

**SPOTLIGHT:** Cassie Lang's introduction into the Marvel Universe stable of superheroes is a pretty great moment... I have to confess, I really liked the name Ant-Girl, and I wish you had kept it.

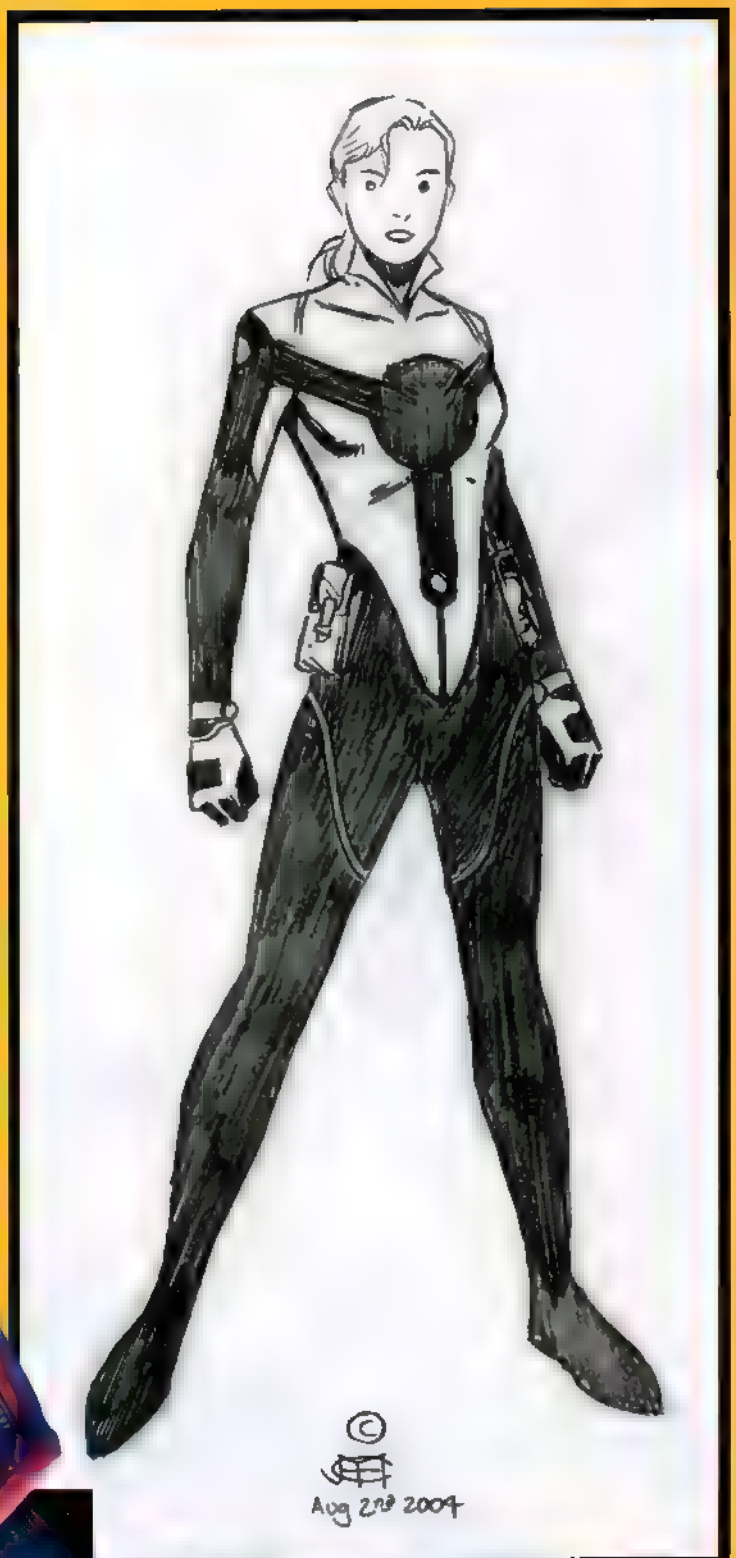
**JIM:** Yeah, but would it still work for when she grows?

**SPOTLIGHT:** I dunno...that's what No-Prizes are for

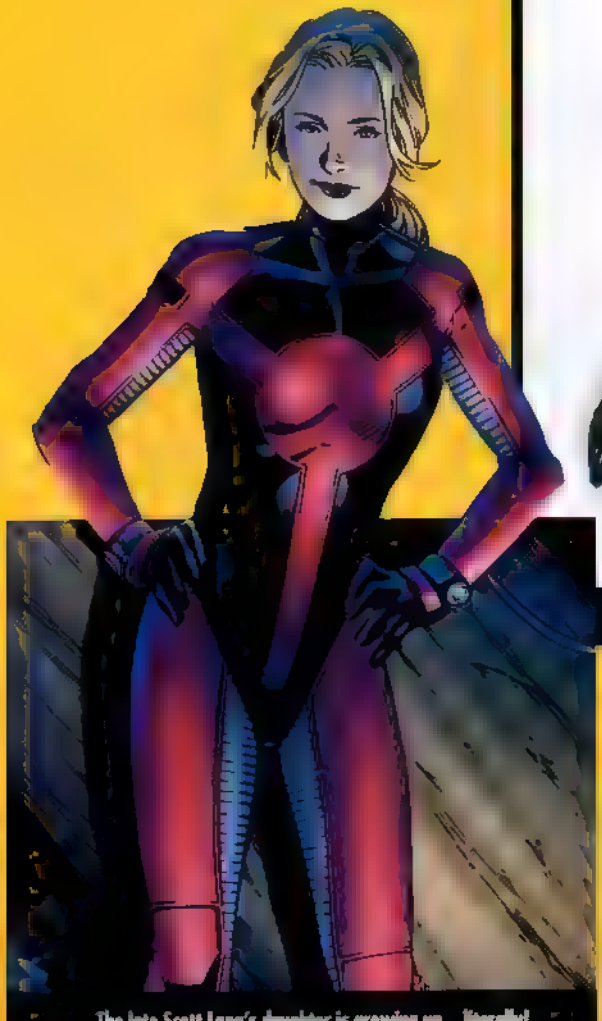
**JIM:** Hey, I suggested that!!! The names are something that seem to be constantly changing. I know Allan's certainly had a difficult time finding ones that everyone's comfortable with.

**SPOTLIGHT:** As of YA #6, she's going by the code name Stature. Now, the way she's framed in that final splash of YA #6, she really carries herself like Hank Pym/Giant-Man. I really dig that mask!

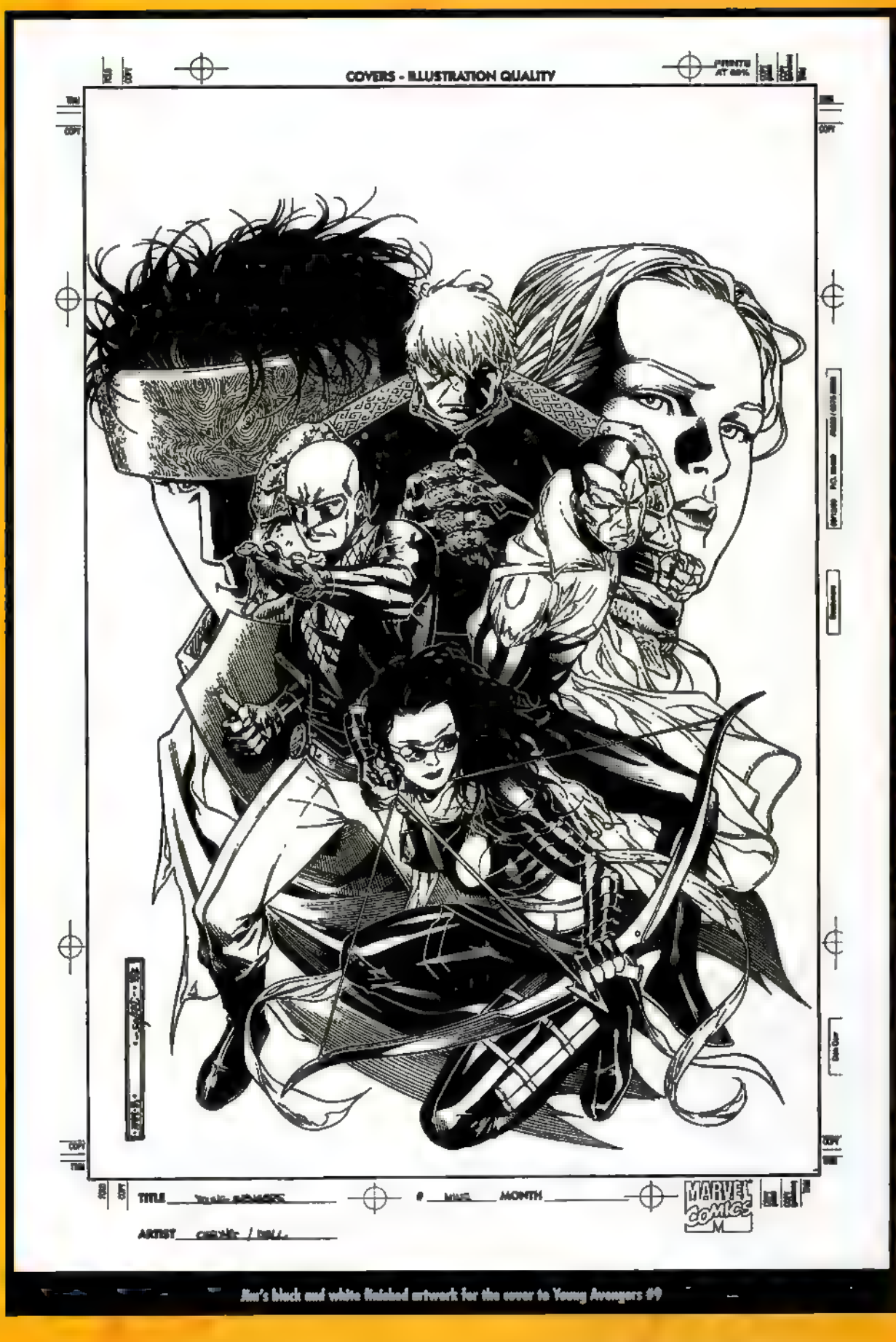
**JIM:** Yes, the costume is basically the same as her dad's, but with the colors reversed. I figured she wouldn't want to stray too far from his design.




Jim's sketch rendering of Cassie Lang as Stature.



The late Scott Lang's daughter is growing up...literally!




Jim's black and white finished artwork for the cover to Young Avengers #9

# FIRST WORK: RED WOLF IN MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #170

**Publication Date: Late December, 1994**

As discussed in the main interview, the implosion of Marvel UK in the early 90s left many talented artists and writers looking for work, and Marvel US invited Jim to do a story for Marvel Comics Presents #170, featuring Red Wolf. Jim's first work for Marvel told the story of the Native American super hero taking on corruption at an Indian gambling casino in Connecticut, getting the job done in eight action-packed pages! Spotlight forced Jim to relive this harrowing moment in his career, when his future as a comics artist was still unknown to both him and his Magic Eight-Ball! (Heck, they credited him as Jimmy Chung! What a way to get your name out there, huh?)

**SPOTLIGHT:** Can you even remember those days? How did you get hooked up with Marvel US to work with them?

**JIM:** That was the gig I was given when Marvel UK slowed down/ceased their output for the US market and reverted to reprinting for the UK market. I believe everyone got a shot at one of these stories, so that was basically how Red Wolf occurred. The mini-series I was working on for MUK was shelved even though I was given the option to complete it. It was called The Encoders and was written by Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning. It was completed and then placed in a filing cabinet at home. It might've seemed kinda pointless to do that, but I was grateful for the experience, and used the opportunity to produce pages that I thought would be useful in a portfolio.

**SPOTLIGHT:** So Marvel editors thought of your Red Wolf story as some kind of tryout- sort of a "let's see what this kid's got?" Did you sense that Marvel liked your work in Red Wolf?

**JIM:** I recall the editor did mention that he liked it, but it was a case of there not being anything else at Marvel available for me at the time. He allowed me to do a few pinups for the Conan B&W magazine, but I don't think I got much more from it.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Looking at the work itself, it's a brisk little story set in eight pages. Did you have any jitters doing your first work for Marvel Comics US?

**JIM:** Maybe. I knew I needed to try to make an impression but as the story was so brief, I was kinda restricted as to what I could do. I had to tackle all kinds of things I hadn't before, and that was when my inexperience reared its head. I tried to be creative to cover up my inadequacies but looking back, they're totally apparent to anyone who'd take the time to look closer.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Okay then...speaking of...!!! Do any compositions from the eight pages really stand out to you as something you like quite a bit? And are there any you wish you could call "do over!" on? (And you can't say ALL OF THEM!)

**JIM:** Hmmm...I think most of the pages display some choices and approaches that I'd probably repeat again, like for example, pages six to eight. Obviously the layouts may be a little different, but the flow is still there. Given the opportunity to redraw the story, I'd probably choose to tackle the first few pages again. I'd certainly make sure I had more reference! For instance, the interiors of casino are non-existent; I just didn't have the ref. Gotta remember...I had no internet back then!

**SPOTLIGHT:** I imagine that kind of exactitude is far more easy to get a handle on nowadays, huh?

**JIM:** Yeah, I was limited to my local library, which was pretty small, and what books and magazines I had around me. The internet has changed the way a lot of things work.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Hey, you gotta like your drawing of Red Wolf crouching with his staff. I think that's a really bad (as in good) image!

**JIM:** Thanks. I was just thinking that I'd probably do that differently. Get a better flow from the main panel, as it looks kinda stiff. Man, that's a silly looking outfit I drew! No disrespect to whoever designed him. It was more a case of me lacking the necessary skills.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Well, I think he looks great, but I've always been a Red Wolf fan. I especially like the final panel. You deliver a very strong, commanding and muscular figure; the alpha male who WILL fix the problem!

**JIM:** Yes, and the only panel where the little wolf cub appears. I do remember the writer adjusting the story as I mentioned to him that I was lousy at drawing animals.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Are you still to this day?

**JIM:** Yeah, I could do better still, though I was forced to draw quite a few horses during CrossGen's Scion.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Speaking of "silly costumes," that gets into the whole notion of costumed heroes, like Red Wolf. There is an inherent silliness in their garb, I suppose, when you apply "real world" terms to their universe. Most comics fans, though, accept the costumes as a given. I say most comics fans, because there are some that have found interesting ways to mine the idea of costume silliness. Grant Morrison's New X-Men is a great example of that. How about you? Do you embrace "the costume" part of comics?

" SHAME, YOU'D MAKE A GREAT POKER PLAYER "
LOBO'S WAITIN' FOR ME, AS I LEAVE. THE CASINO'S ALREADY BACK TO NORMAL MONEY FLOODING INTO THE RESERVATION
IT'S A GOOD THING THEY'RE DOIN' THERE I JUST DON'T SEE MYSELF AS PART OF IT
AND BESIDES, THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY TRIBE IN NEED OF MY PROTECTION

**JIM:** I love the costumes myself. I grew up with that universe so it's not that unusual for me to see the brightly colored outfits. Obviously though, with the changing times, the costumes have shifted to reflect that. I don't think we can get away with the underpants over the pants thing anymore. I think the Ultimate Universe certainly shows us this, though I was tempted to have Hulkling wear a pair of purple underpants over the black pants.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Ok, so how long after Red Wolf did you get your next work from Marvel?

**JIM:** I think it may have been a few months. I don't recall too well. After the Conan pinups, the next project I took on for Marvel was Force Works. I knew that I had to do my very best because I really wanted to continue working, but I didn't really have a plan or idea of where things would go from there. I just tried to improve on each and every page, and critiqued the work from the viewpoint of a reader or editor.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Well, we're happy to see where you've made it to today, and we can count Red Wolf in MCP #170 as a small stepping stone. A very small one, yes, but it is significant as your first Marvel work. Do you have anything nice to say to Red Wolf in closing?

**JIM:** Yes, I look forward to tackling the character again in the Red Wolf: Year One maxi-series!

# BULLPEN BULLETINS

ITEM! One thing missing from the current Bullpen Bulletins is Stan's Soapbox. That little yellow box with musings from the living embodiment of Marvel's Mount Rushmore was always a favorite. Stan Lee can really make you feel like a Madcap Maven of Mighty Marveldom. Yep...Stan's Soapbox was something special. And it sure would have been nice to have him come on board in our humble little digs and give the "Here's What's Up!" to loyal Spotlight readers. But we couldn't arrange to fly him all the way to the Bullpen so we could take dictation while he raved on about all the things he loves about Marvel Comics! Do you know how much that would cost, man? So after much thinking, the Batty Bullpen figured it would be a prime use of that real estate to get editorial commentary from that other person who loves Marvel Comics as much as Stan does...heck, maybe even MORE than Stan does! Who is that person? Why...it's YOU! Yes, starting this month, 'Stan's Soapbox' becomes 'Fan's Soapbox', and we'd love to give you the chance to wax poetic about Marvel Comics! Here's the current theme: What I love/find interesting/think is so special about Marvel Comics! That's it! I think we can all answer that question in our own special ways. In fact, we've got an ace Marvel fan to start the ball rolling this very month! I'll let Justin Fairfax of Los Angeles, CA take it away with his Fan's Soapbox, where he shares his thoughts about today's Marvel Comics and how they tell their stories. For details on how you can write for Fan's Soapbox, visit the Letters Page!

ITEM! It's an American tradition up there with baseball, apple pie and rush hour traffic: Free Comic Book Day! And this year's offering from the House of Ideas can't be beat! BRIAN K. VAUGHAN brings you a X-MEN/RUNAWAYS extravaganza that won't cost you a single penny. Nor will it cost anything to your niece, nephew, grandma, great uncle, or any other friend or family member you drag to your local comic shop on FCBD!

To find Marvel Comics at a local comic shop, call 1-888-COMICBOOK or visit marvel.com

## FAN'S SOAPBOX

Me, I blame it all on the Olympics.

1969: Marvel attempted an experiment in complete-in-one stories, each issue had a beginning, middle and end! Why? Some feared the continued stories were turning off potential readers. For whatever reasons, this policy didn't last too long, and before you could say, "To Be Hulk-Inued" it was back to business as usual at the House Of Ideas.

1983: Due to the Soviets (you remember them—the guys Tony Stark was always tussling with in those old issues of Tales Of Suspense?) pulling out of the 1984 Olympics, Marvel found itself with Olympics-related comics material they had developed but now couldn't publish. Marvel, never a company to let something go to waste, altered the story a bit to leave the Olympic references out and ended up creating something new. It became Marvel's very first limited series: Marvel Super-Hero Contest Of Champions.

The limited series sold well, mostly on the novelty of throwing every Marvel hero that existed at that point (and adding a few new ones—Odin knows my life was made more complete by the addition of Shamrock and the Arabian Knight), starting a chain of events that led to Secret Wars 1 & 2, and many more to this day. Somehow along the way, four-to-six issues were determined to be the optimum length of the mini-series. Lately the mini-series concept has been absorbed into the regular ongoing titles—mostly to make those stories easier and more sellable as "graphic novels" in trade and hardcover collections, for bookstore distribution.

To make most comic stories worthy of such novelistic treatment, the pacing of the stories has slowed down considerably, brought to a more "cinematic" kind of storytelling, where mood and nuance have elevated in importance. Some comics fans like the new approach and decry the Classic Marvel approach as too melodramatic and unreal. To me, it's all in the execution—good writing or art is good writing or art—there will always be bad in both approaches. I wouldn't trade my Lee/Kirby "Galactus Trilogy" arcs nor my Bendis/Maleev "Lowlife" arcs. One has bombast, spectacle, drama, action—the other, suspense, nuance, emotion, mood. Are both effective comics? I say thee Yea!

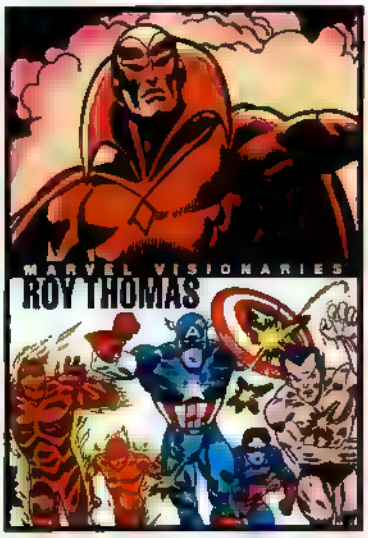
Now, while this style is perfect for crime-noirs like Bendis' Daredevil and espionage-thrillers like Brubaker's Captain America, in lesser hands and on inappropriate characters this style can seem a betrayal of what Stan and Jack founded. Can you imagine what the aforementioned Galactus Trilogy would look like if paced like today's comics?

Well, it turns out you don't have to—the current Ultimate Galactus trilogy of mini-series gives you an alternate version with modern pacing: The Slow Build leading to The Big Pow. Should all comics be one style or the other? Of course not—Vive La Difference! I prefer the variety of styles, as long as the storytelling is strong, the characters interesting, the artwork amazes and delights. All I ask is: Is there enough "bang for the buck"?

I agree that every issue should be treated as someone's first—but that doesn't mean an obligation to recap the origin, powers and relationships of the main character in every issue. It does mean giving that hypothetical first-time reader, or returning reader—a good helping of drama, character, action and intrigue for their $2.99 a shot. And the Marvel Comics I read give me all that in spades. I think the worst sin a Marvel Comic can commit is to bore the pants off someone! 'Nuff Said!

— Justin ("I can't believe I actually paid money for The Generic Comic") Fairfax

ITEM! When it comes to comics, the link between creator and fan is a special one, and nobody has represented this link better than Roy Thomas. Roy started out as one of the most passionate voices in the early days of comics fandom, and became one of Marvel's most prolific and acclaimed writers, eventually rising all the way to the position of Editor-In-Chief! As a writer, Roy penned the exploits of just about every Marvel hero and pushed the idea of a cohesive, shared Marvel Universe, all the while wearing the influence of classic literature on his sleeve. What a visionary! Hmm...sounds like it's about time for MARVEL VISIONARIES: ROY THOMAS, the latest in our awesome series of hardcovers that recognize the creative giants of Mighty Marveldom! This collection of vintage Roy Thomas tales includes the adventures of the Hulk, the Fantastic Four, several issues of his definitive Avengers run, and even stories from Millie the Model and Nat Brand Ecch! Combining acknowledged classics with rare material has become a hallmark of the Visionaries series, and Marvel could not be prouder to bring them to you. Look for MARVEL VISIONARIES: ROY THOMAS in stores this month!




ITEM! OHOTMU is not a creature in this month's TALES TO ASTONISH MASTERWORKS (though it sounds like a good name for one!) No, OHOTMU is the long-revered acronym for Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe, and any fan will be pleased in all ways from A to Z by the news of ESSENTIAL OHOTMU VOL. 1, premiering this month. It reprints the first fifteen issues in full, from Abomination to Zzzax, with extra appendices devoted to more dead Marvel characters than you could bring back to life in a single comic event! Like a prehistoric bug caught in amber, this Essential volume will take you back to a Marvel Universe frozen in time.

# MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

## WARREN ELLIS - OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

**REAL NAME:** Warren Ellis
**OCCUPATION:** Writer
**PLACE OF BIRTH:** South-East England
**YEAR OF BIRTH:** February 1968
**WEBSITE:** www.warrenellis.com

wit and startlingly honest demeanor.

Pete Wisdom

and he once again departed from Marvel.

**SUPERHUMAN POWERS:** Unremitting fearlessness when charting the dark edges of his characters; possession (and usage) of an astonishing array of English slurs that it's probably best don't translate across the Atlantic; prolificacy- he can write more comics than you can. It's true!

**THE WARREN ELLIS MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:**

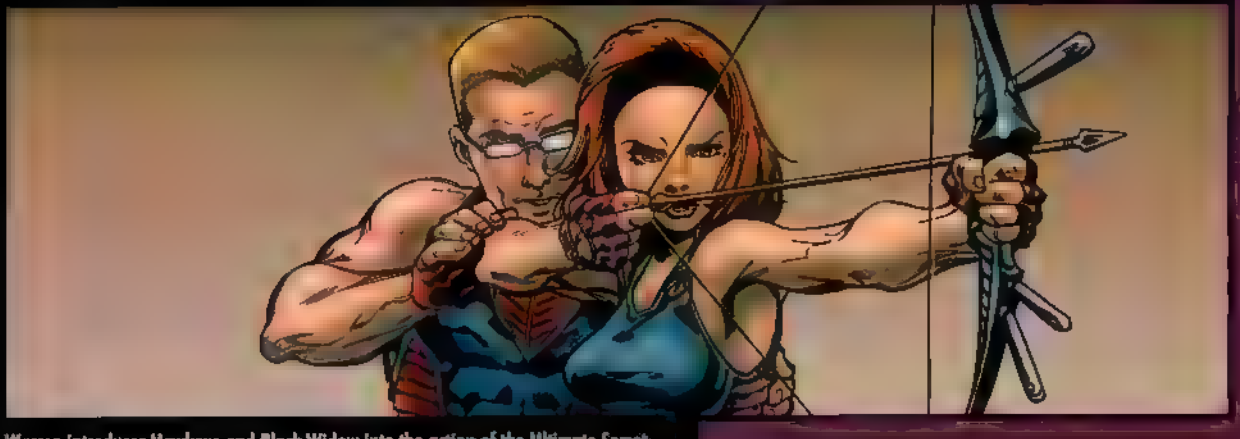
*2099 AD: Apocalypse (one-shot, 1995)*
*2099 AD: Genesis (one-shot, 1996)*
*2099 Unlimited #4, 7, 9 (1994-1995)*
*2099 World of Doom Special (1995)*
*Carnage: Mind Bomb (one-shot, 1996)*
*Daredevil #343 (1995)*
*Doctor Strange #80-82 (1995)*
*Doctor Who Magazine #174 (one page text story, 1991)*
*Doom 2099 #24-39 (1994-1996)*
*Druid #1-4 (1995)*
*Excalibur #83-103 (1994-1996)*
*Generation X #63-70 (2000)*
*Ghost Rider #55, Annual #2 (1994)*
*Hellstorm #12-21 (1994)*
*Marvel Spotlight: Warren Ellis/Jim Cheung (2006)*
*Nextwave #1-up (2006)*
*Iron Man #1-up (2005-2006)*
*Pryde & Wisdom #1-3 (1996)*
*Ruins #1-2 (1995)*

*Star Jammers #1-4 (1995)*
*Storm #1-4 (1996)*
*Thor #491-494 (1995)*
*Ultraforce/Avengers (one-shot, 1995)*
*Ultimate Extinction #1-up (2006)*
*Ultimate Fantastic Four #7-18 (2004-2005)*
*Ultimate Nightmare #1-6 (2004)*
*Ultimate Secret #1-4 (2005)*
*What If? #77 (1995)*
*Wolverine #119-122 (1998)*
*X-Calibre #1-4 (1995)*
*X-Force #102-109 (2000)*
*X-Force #102: Rough Cut (2000)*
*X-Man #63-70 (2000)*
*X-Men/WildC.A.T.S.: The Dark Age (one-shot, 1998)*

COLLECT 'EM IN TRADE:

Thor Visionaries: Mike Deodato, Jr. TPB
Ultimate Fantastic Four Vol. 1 HC
Ultimate Fantastic Four Vol. 2: Doom TPB
Ultimate Fantastic Four Vol. 3: N-Zone TPB
Ultimate Galactus Vol. 1: Ultimate Nightmare TPB
Ultimate Galactus Vol. 2: Ultimate Secret TPB

The end of the world according Warren: read all about it in Ultimate Extinction.



Warren introduces Hawkeye and Black Widow into the action of the Ultimate Secret.

He's got the whole world in his hands: Reed Richards contemplates how to save the world from Galh Lak Tus. (from Ultimate Extinction #1)

# THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH WARREN ELLIS

WARREN: [illegible] do doing this by accident — Mark Millar was supposed to do it, but illness [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: Many new fans may not be familiar at all with the [illegible] both these crowds at the same time?

[illegible] a few hints as to why that may be!

WARREN: [illegible] stuff worked because of its content — they could really sell that weird, slightly campy stuff. I mean, this world-eating entity in a big blue [illegible] T-shirt and shorts without legs. From his belt [illegible] was all part of the over-the-top approach [illegible] Fantastic Four had at the time, and they carried you along with their ride. Very [illegible] that stuff will play in the more grounded [illegible] the Ultimate approach. I really can't believe [illegible] and have to stay true to the approach I [illegible] hired to work in. Doubtless, a lot of [illegible] old readers will hate the Ultimate [illegible] take on the Galactus/Surfer [illegible] stories. My only consolation is [illegible] that most of those people are [illegible] now too aged to harm me in [illegible] any serious way.

## ULTIMATE TRILOGY

SPOTLIGHT: Playing around in the Ultimate Universe gives top creators a chance to re-imagine the classic characters and themes of early Marvel for a new audience. With Planetary and Fell, you've had great success at telling your own stories [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: How long are you of the old Silver Age of Marvel Comics? Is the Galactus story from Fantastic Four #48-50 a particularly

revered storyline for you?

and the war comics.

**SPOTLIGHT:** I really dig that you incorporated the Tunguska Event

**WARREN:** Well, you know, Joe Quesada's been, I don't know, a fan of Fortean and generally strange stuff, and he wanted the prelude to involve Tunguska and a "herald" of Galactus, who would prove to be the historical basis that kind of created the modern Marvel Universe. Right with the original Ms. version, who was Sandra Hyde's glowing guy.

The Tunguska Event was in 1908 — it moved it forward in time on Ultimate Earth — but was essentially as depicted in Ultimate Nightmare, an explosion over the Tunguska river area in Siberia of unknown origin.

**SPOTLIGHT:** You really didn't pull any punches with the horrors unleashed

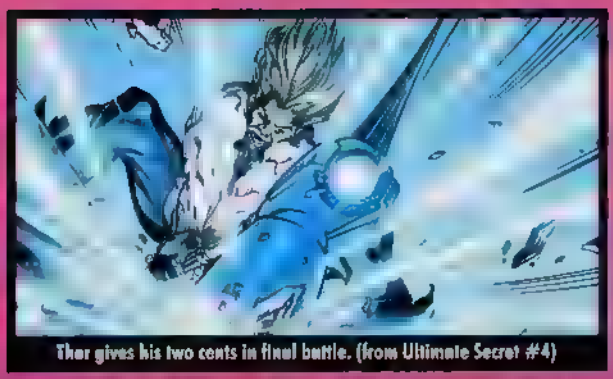
to tell Ultimate Nightmare?

Ultimate line.

**WARREN:** Well, you know, I'm not a big fan of yellow, not so much.

**SPOTLIGHT:** One last question: a common theme that I imagine is fascinating was Reed Richard's struggle to figure out the Event. Standing in the wonderment inspired by the Fantastic Four, Galactus is a massive opposite: less a model of mankind's exploration for pure knowledge, perhaps analogous in any way — either his or ours — to how we can view our own reality?

WAKE UP! Nick Fury leads Cap, Falcon and Black Widow into the dark unknown of the Ultimate Nightmare.



Thor gives his two cents in final battle. (from Ultimate Secret #4)

(Indio/Pakistan) girl into an

the amount of email I got from people who'd never seen themselves, or someone from their ethnicity, in a US-published comic before.

**SPOTLIGHT:** The social setting of the Golden and Silver Age precluded blacks and women from getting a fair shake at representation. Your Sam Wilson is a nod to the kind of characters we should have gotten back then, but didn't. When you've had the opportunity to unveil new versions of old characters into the Ultimate Universe, where do you find yourself pushing them?

Warren updated the Marvel Universe Falcon, seen here on the cover to Captain America and the Falcon #201.

circa 2005.

**SPOTLIGHT:** Was Philip Lawson, aka Mahr Vel from Ultimate Secret, a

## NEXTWAVE

**SPOTLIGHT:**

**WARREN:** I

**SPOTLIGHT:** morning to work on it?

**WARREN:**

**SPOTLIGHT:** Dave Buckley cry. Are those tears of joy? Or fear of what will happen when Nextwave is published!?!?

Falcon flying into action. (from Ultimate Nightmare #1)

**WARREN:**

Cover to Nextwave #3

**WARREN:** A little of both, I think. I was kind of nervous when I saw the first script in, because it was so unlike anything Marvel were publishing that I was aware of, and it flies in the face of the current movement in superhero comics — this faux-gritty stuff, the grim tin-headed sexual assault, neck snapping funnies and the like. All with that little wink, you know, that everything will be happy and shiny in the end.

I have a lot of good friends at DC, and I'm glad to see them succeed, but I don't know that anyone really needed JUSTICE LEAGUE, SVU. And I'm not entirely sure how Hawkeye became Jesus. But anyway... it's nothing like all that stuff. And it's got some strange in it, you know? And some weird

**SPOTLIGHT:** How does it make you feel to know you've made Dan Buckley cry?

**SPOTLIGHT:** Perhaps you can give us an idea of what they say about Jessica that you found compelling, leading the team? I [illegible] Marvel/Photon from the Avengers.

**WARREN:** I wanted more women and not a lot of men, and I wanted to be a great comedy book. I like the idea of basically destroying the Avengers, which she'll tell you until you're all sick of it. But I was kind of the crappy fifth Avengers, the lowest. Eight white guys, a Hispanic and a black woman. I'm having some fun with that in flashbacks. She's

But I don't want to [illegible] imperceptible particle...

**SPOTLIGHT:** [illegible] I was a kid. What are your plans for Karen Stack? (Pokemon, by gender.)

**WARREN:** Oh, God, I've [illegible] movies need The Robot, right?

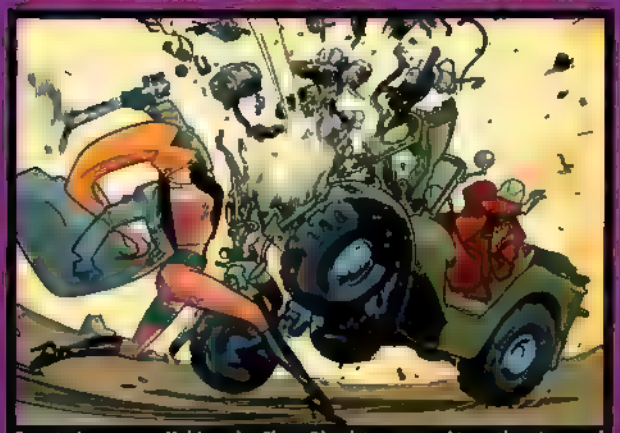
**SPOTLIGHT:** Rounding out the cast is Tabitha Smith, aka Boom Ulysses Bloodstone; and a character called The Captain, who is a new

right? Tabby Smith was a gift — a kleptomaniac blonde who makes things

as important as the "Explodo."

distillation of this philosophy.

**SPOTLIGHT:** What kind of mood is struck by the artwork of Stuart

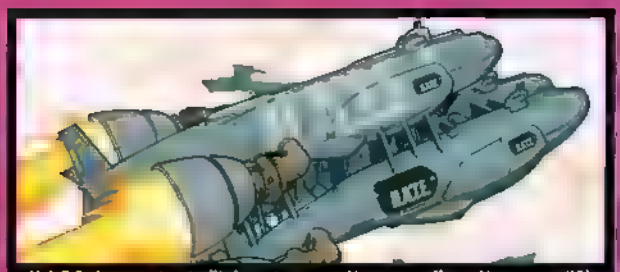


Stuart Immonen Unhinged: Else Bloodstone wrecking the jeep of a Beyond Corp. agent. (from Nextwave #1)

Marvel comic art.

**WARREN:** His style is sort of taking Bruce Timm, Geof Darrow and Gorillaz

Also, untreated mental illness.



H.A.T.E. Aeromarine in flight to intercept Nextwave. (from Nextwave #1)

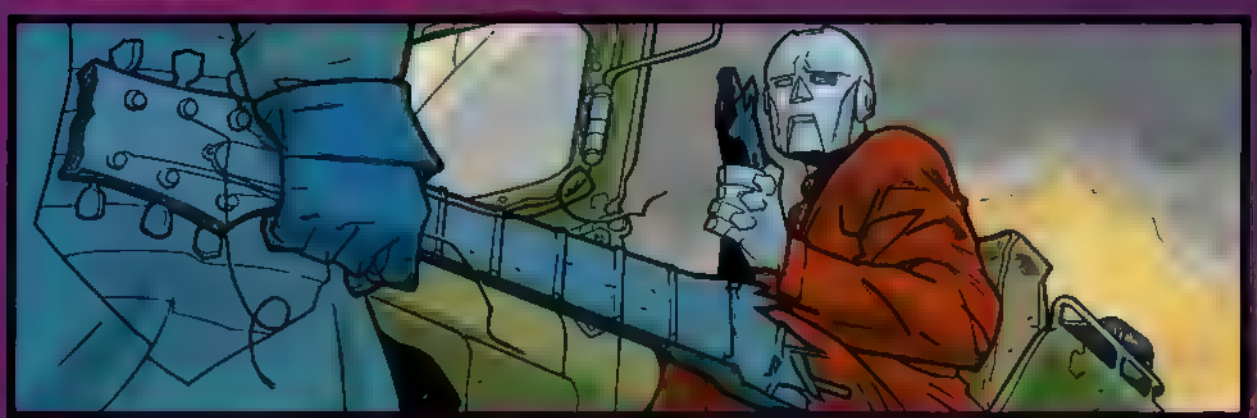
is about the length of an average French comics album. Which means nothing at all. I just like saying it.

**WARREN:**

**SPOTLIGHT:**

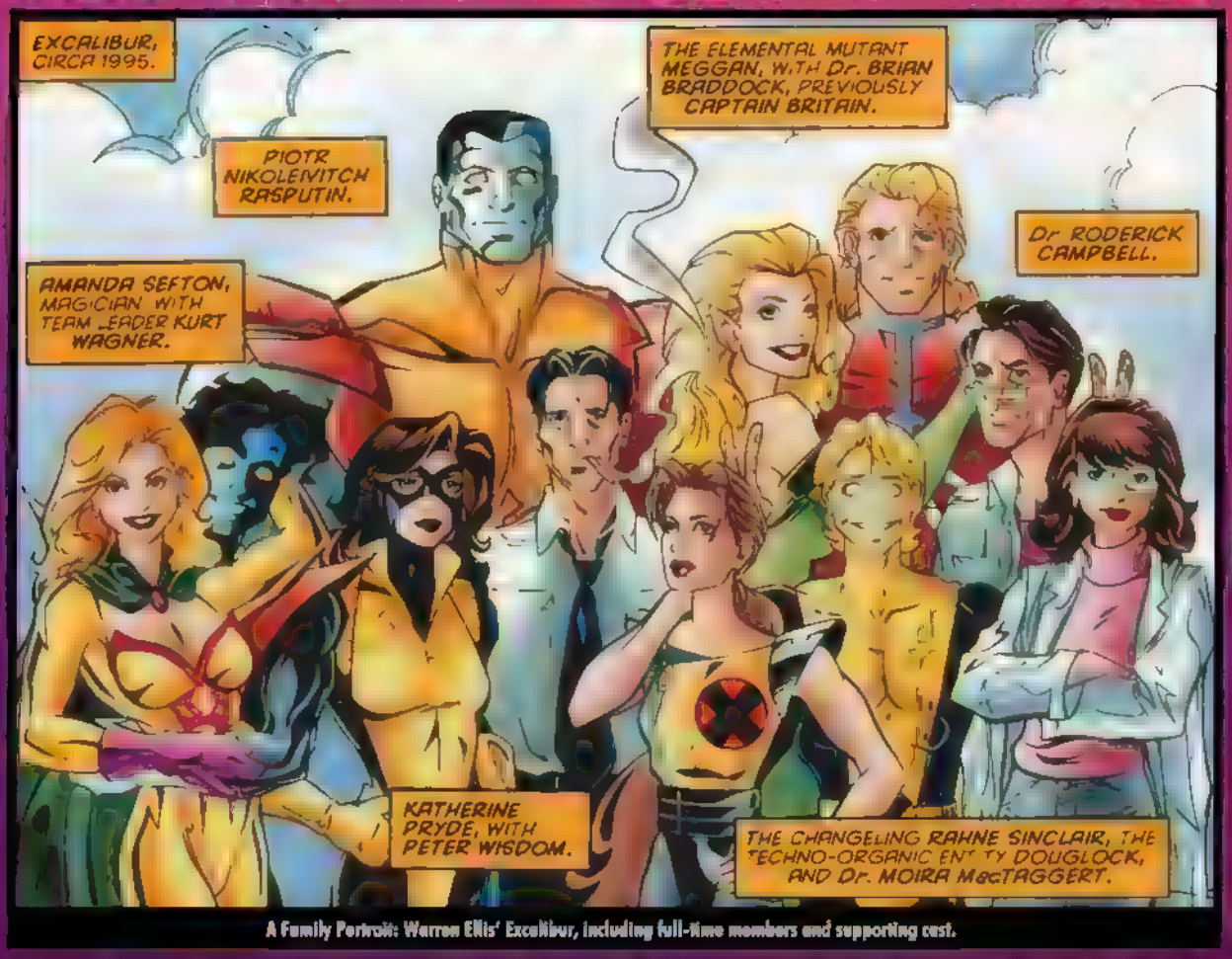
**WARREN:**

*Warren's next work for Marvel is the aforementioned Ultimate Extinction and Nextwave, both of which have first-issue's premiering this month! Also on the horizon is Warren's take on the New Universe! What? You think Marvel was going to forget the twentieth anniversary of the New Universe?*



# EXCALIBUR

## THE WARREN ELLIS YEARS


EXCALIBUR, CIRCA 1995.
PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH RASPUTIN.
THE ELEMENTAL MUTANT MEGGAN, WITH Dr. BRIAN BRADDOCK, PREVIOUSLY CAPTAIN BRITAIN.
Dr RODERICK CAMPBELL.
AMANDA SEFTON, MAGICIAN WITH TEAM LEADER KURT WAGNER.
KATHERINE PRYDE, WITH PETER WISDOM.
THE CHANGELING RAHNE SINCLAIR, THE TECHNO-ORGANIC ENTITY DOUGLOCK, AND Dr. MOIRA MacTAGGERT.

**A Family Portrait: Warren Ellis' Excalibur, including full-time members and supporting cast.**

Warren Ellis' first stint at Marvel Comics lasted from 1994 to 1997, before he moved to Wildstorm for career-defining books like Authority and Planetary. The titles for which he was most known during this early period at Marvel included his runs on Hellstorm and Doom 2099. Both of these books suffered through moribund sales that eventually got them cancelled. It was his turn on Excalibur, however, that brought his talents to its widest audience ever, and it was a book that he not only lifted out of its own creative doldrums, but left in fine shape upon his departure.

Excalibur was Marvel's "European X-Men," a team of mutants situated at Moira MacTaggart's Muir Island research facility in Scotland. Originally conceived in the late 1980s by Chris Claremont and Alan Davis, the team was patched together from mutants who had broken from the ranks of Xavier's X-Men (Nightcrawler, Kitty Pryde, Rachel Summers), and longtime Marvel UK heroes Captain Britain and Meggan. The tone was light-hearted, and the action was often in the form of madcap hijinks. The rest of the X-Books could be seen as deadly serious; Excalibur was where you'd go to see your favorite mutants clowning around.

But in the years preceding Ellis' arrival, Alan Claremont and Davis were long gone, the book had lost any such sense of clarity. It settled into a purposeless track as "just another X-book," and with no distinguishing characteristics to separate it from others, it needed a shot in the arm. And who better to give a shot in the arm than Warren Ellis?

"He was put on the book with what seemed, to me at least, to be very little fanfare," says longtime X-fan Josh York. "He just appeared with issue #83, and I didn't know if he was writing a fill-in arc, or what. I only know him as 'that Hellstorm guy.' Such fans could have been frightened to death that Excalibur might submerge itself into dark fantasies the like of which appeared in the pages of Hellstorm, and though Warren excluded no such things from his storytelling arsenal, it was only as a complement to a wider range of storytelling contexts. He also helped bring back some of the light-heartedness that had established Excalibur as different from the other X-Books.

Warren reached back into the bin of underused X-Men supporting characters and found abandoned treasure. In rescuing Lockheed from dormancy, he wasted no time in establishing the little dragon as ruthless in provoking Kitty's new paramour, Pete Wisdom. And for a guy who has since gotten the reputation for being an 'anti-superhero' writer, you wouldn't know it from his demeanor in the pages of Excalibur. "He'd done his homework," says York. "He was well-versed on the at-times Byzantine mythos of Captain Britain and Excalibur, and although he never delved into goofy things like the Crazy Gang, or cosmic stories like the Captain Britain Corps, he brought in enough things from the various characters' pasts to satisfy the continuity-loving X-readers."

In Excalibur, Warren was able to make the title matter again. He infused it with exciting plots, an interesting stable of characters, and a true understanding of these characters- the full scope of their motivations not just as mutants, but as humans. It was this balancing of the light and shade of his character's hearts and motivations that made his run on Excalibur such a special one. Those 21 issues (24 if you count the Pryde & Wisdom limited series) have stood the test

— or rereading if you have!

## Here's a rundown on Warren Ellis' two-year run on Excalibur.

### EXCALIBUR #83-85

"A little girl and a crippled witch? Stop me? Ha! I'll take the sword from you, and I'll cut your skin off with it!!" — Gravemoss, from Excalibur #85

Warren crafts his first Excalibur script around a plot by Scott Lobdell in the three-part Soul Sword Trilogy.

Illyana Rasputin's Soul Sword is back — but this time it comes from inside Kitty Pryde, which becomes quite the inconvenience to our pinning friend! On the hunt for the sword is a threesome of baddies: the wicked Gravemoss, who overtakes the form of Nightcrawler to gain the sword; Shrill, a mystic who is debilitated with excruciating

Amanda Sefton

### EXCALIBUR #86-87

Excalibur, from Excalibur #86

Warren makes his first impression on the team! Introducing Pete Wisdom: on the outside, a brusque loner in a tattered trenchcoat; on the inside, a man with more goodwill for others than he lets on. His entry into Excalibur's roster is as an attache connected with Black Air, a British Intelligence "sci-ops" team. These mystery agents have goaded Europe's X-Men to investigate a curious mutant-revealing bullet in use in Genosha. Besides contending with human vs. mutant violence on

### EXCALIBUR #88-90

ge with Kitty Pryde! Profoundly observant and with a keen eye for the true nature of those to whom she is close, Kitty penetrates through Wisdom's rough exterior and slowly builds an attraction for him...and the feeling is mutual! If only they could find the time to sneak a kiss through the hail of bullets — Wisdom's old buddies at Black Air want him dead! Why? Because they've got a secret program that aims to build anti-mutant technology from the research into the alien biology of The

trilogy of stories

### EXCALIBUR #90-93

— Rahne, from Excalibur #90

Warren tells a trio of self-contained stories. In Excalibur #90, he allows the team a brief respite from calamity by sending them on a three-quarter night out to a local pub for a round (or eight, as it were) of beer. (Actually, Pete Wisdom prefers straight scotch — no ice!) Ale is consumed, the Ramones' "Baby, I Love You" is playing on the juke box, and souls are bared.

And what do we learn about our friends? Let's see...X-Men fans will want to know that Moira's accent

and aberrant behavior.

a man to his knees.

## EXCALIBUR #94-95

Fans of Days of Future Past, the all-time classic X-Men stories presented in Uncanny X-Men #141-142, are already familiar with the future Earth where Sentinels reign supreme and work overtime to send many of our favorite mutants to their graves. All that Claremont/Byrne action took place in the United States, however. Warren Ellis wants us to know what that future timeline had in store for the other side of the Atlantic Ocean- the land of Excalibur — and he tells us

classic stories of Claremont/Byrne.

Excalibur #95 was first issue of Warren's Excalibur

also a crossover with X-Men, the refugee from Marvel's

claimed at Kitty and Pete.

## EXCALIBUR #96-100

GREATEST!!! — Nightcrawler, Excalibur #96

possess an ability to speak; too bad

's his unrestrained wrath against

Pete Wisdom that has brought this

out of him! The devilish little dragon

steals Pete's clothing, his cigarettes,

and taunts him mercilessly...all in

defense of his dear master, Kitty.

That won't be Pete W's biggest problem,

though, as the Hellfire Club's London

branch is hemorrhaging from the

inside. The Red King and Black King

are being toyed with by a lurker in

about what Black Air really wants!

adventure that reads at a lively

step; Warren reminds us that

as comics readers, though

we may be able to

step and take a

breath, Excalibur

cannot! Sorti

two, will take

the team

threat of Onslaught passing, which is a great relief. But at the same time, Kitty and Pete Wisdom can't enjoy a nice breakfast at the Chinese and Chalk without getting hit on by American secret agents with a clear message: stay out of America matters! Y'see, Captain America and all the Avengers have been shunted out of Earth's reality in a classic episode in Marvel history called Heroes Reborn (well, some would say it's classic!) And it seems to these secret agents and the government

Douglock...it ain't nice! Not nice at all!

## EXCALIBUR #101-103

— Pete Wisdom, Excalibur #103

read the book yourself!

Which...they do!

# PRYDE & WISDOM #1-3

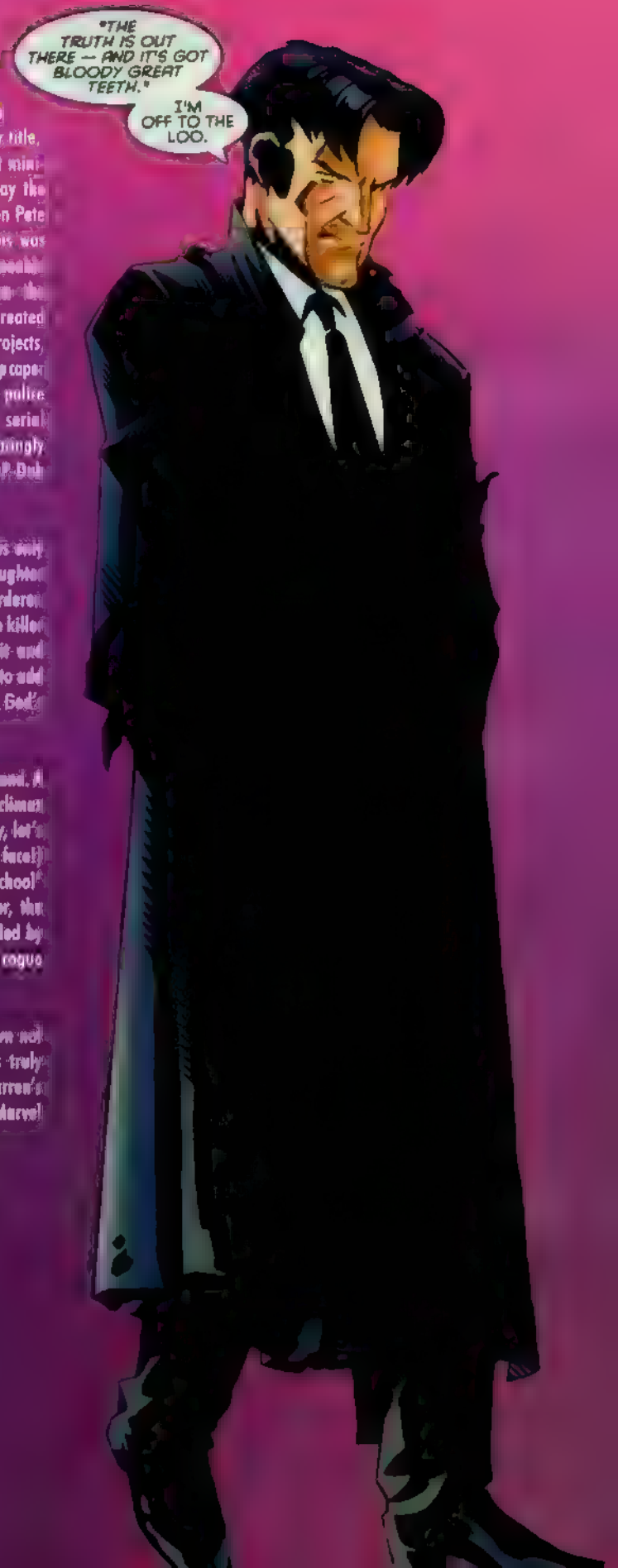
But wait! There's more!

Running concurrently with his final bow on the Excalibur title, Warren wrote this three-part mini-series that put on full display the still-new relationship between Pete Wisdom and Kitty Pryde. This was the last chance for the foreseeable future to get the most out of the character and romance he created before moving on to other projects, and Warren delivered a madcap caper that brought in an additional police detail, a religiously fanatical serial killer, and Pete's intimidatingly smart and sexy sister. He also plumbed a family history for a "P. Doll" that ranged from light hilarity to unfathomable tragedy.

As for the story plot, it seems that Pete's best friend – one of his only friends from the days before Kitty and Excalibur – has seen his daughter go missing while she was on the trail of a freakish mass-murderer. Leave it to Warren to craft a Hellstormish type of perp: when the killer tracks you down, he alchemically transforms your soul, spirit and blood into a giant rock that helps him talk to Heaven. Oh, and to add to the fun, he writes messages on your bones to God, begging God's forgiveness for his sins!

Naturally, this is not something Pete and Kitty are going to let stand. A wonderful car chase scene leads the mini-series off, reaching a climax that will have Kitty Pryde fans standing up and cheering (okay, let's be realistic...sitting down and with a big comics fan grin on their face!). Along the way, we meet the kooky kooks of F.66, the "Mystery School" branch of the London PD; we are introduced to Pete's sister, the brilliant crime pathologist Romany Wisdom; and are confounded by England's "anti-Charles Xavier," a woman motivated to murder rogue mutants, not try and save them!

By the time we reach the end — where Pete has to face down not only the killer, but also the unbelievably cruel facts of his truly bizarre family life — we've gone through another series of Warren's sadistically inventive plot movements and come out happy Marvel Comics readers at the end.



# RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE

## Warren Ellis' Nextwave pitch

Last issue in Marvel Spotlight, we published two of Sean McKeever's pitches that didn't quite make it to the "green light" stage. They were "wild pitches," an earnest attempt at throwing a strike, full of solid story ideas and potential, but for whatever reason not in step with what Marvel wanted to publish at the time.

Reading Warren Ellis' pitch for Nextwave will have you wondering how on Earth this particular pitch was called a strike, right down the middle. It's like no pitch that has ever crossed the desk of a Marvel editor before. Warren's gathered together a collection of somewhat well-known and obscure Marvel properties and made an origami out of them; depending on your point of view, this is dastardly and indulgently irreverent comics re-creationism by an out-of-control comics writer. And to others, it's innovative, fresh and crackling good Marvel comics. Of course, there is a third way: it's both!

Whatever it is, it's not Marvel Comics business as usual. Do like Marvel did…give it a chance, and let it explode all over you! Comics go BOOM!

### nextwave
### Warren Ellis

This is a "remix" book. The Next Wave was actually the name of a crap Marvel supervillain group in the 80s. All the protagonists are old Marvel characters or carry old Marvel trademark names.

The quasi-governmental security and defense organisation H.A.T.E. — Highest Anti-Terrorism Effort — bought the rights to the name, and Dirk Anger, Director Of H.A.T.E., recruited five troubled, obscure superheroes to form The Next Wave Squad, an elite intervention force in the War On Terrorism:

MONICA RAMBEAU used to be known as Captain Marvel. She once ran the Avengers. She will tell you this. A lot. An unlikely veteran of superhuman combat, wanting to do her bit for her country, she found herself leading this team. AARON STACK used to be called Machine Man, but his name is Aaron Stack, and it's none of your business that he's wired his robot brain to be affected by alcohol. ELSA BLOODSTONE is the daughter of near-immortal monster hunter Ulysses Bloodstone, wears the same creepy gem that makes her superhumanly resistant to harm, works in the family business and tends to come off like Lara Croft's evil twin sister. THE CAPTAIN claims not to remember his real name — his chequered career has seen him basically be every crap Marvel character called Captain something. TABITHA SMITH used to be Boom Boom in the New Mutants and Meltdown in X-Force, and she's a terrible kleptomaniac, and it's because of her light fingers that The Next Wave Squad discovered that…

…well, it seems that H.A.T.E. isn't fighting the same war on terrorism as everyone else.

They are funded and supplied by a multinational called The Beyond Corporation, and much of their time seems to be taken on testing and deploying weapons. The Beyond Corp used to be a terrorist cell called S.I.L.E.N.T. In an open bidding process, they have co-opted their opponents to test their own Unusual Weapons Of Mass Destruction.

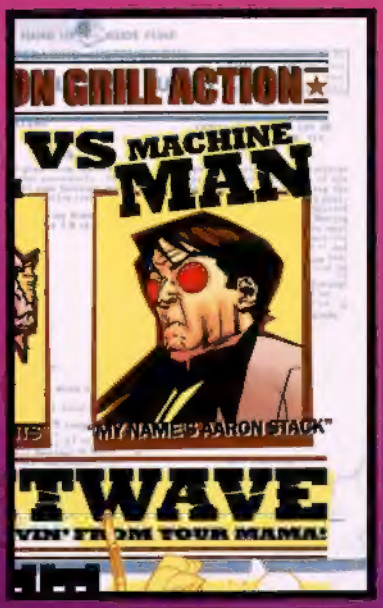
This is all laid out in the Beyond Corp's Marketing Plan, which the Next Wave Squad have stolen. Along with The Shockwave Rider, an experimental assault plane with an inexhaustible power supply.

Nextwave have gone rogue with the blueprint for Beyond's plan to devastate a series of American towns in a product-testing process.

For instance: digging the 150-foot atomic monster in purple underpants Fin Fang Foom out of his hibernation sac inside a mountain overlooking the town of Abcess, North Dakota.

Nextwave have that to cope with. And the Beyond Corp Human Resources Department, an army of plant-human freaks in red three-

piece suits and Dr Doom armor. And, of course, H.A.T.E., with their goofy Sixties-Steranko technology, and their immense flying Aeromarine, four massive submarines nailed together with girders and plastic tunnels.




Dirk Anger is slowly having a massive nervous breakdown. He thinks no one can tell.

Two-issue story arcs – every two months, a complete story, and then on to the next threat on the list, or the next trap H.A.T.E. set for them. One story-arc makes a European book. Three makes a TPB. Six make an Absolute-style book. Early storylines include, yes, the return of Fin Fang Foom.

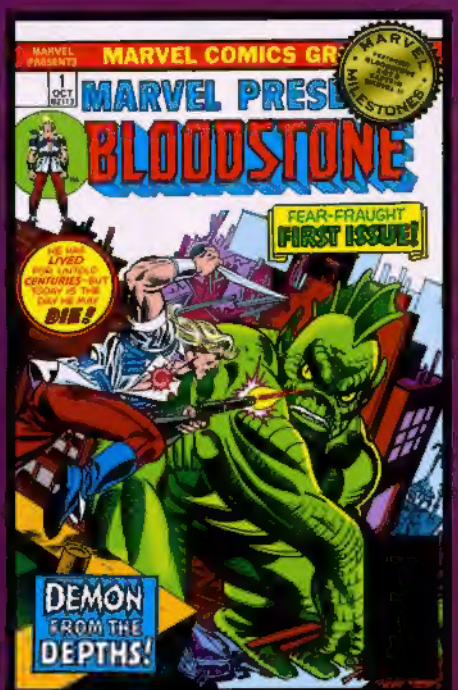
NEXTWAVE is not about Character Arcs and Learning and Morals and Hugs. It is about cramming an insane movie into 44 pages at a time. It is about the mad things underpinning Marvel Comics — S.H.I.E.L.D., Shogun Warrior, The Mindless Ones, Devil Dinosaur — and it is about special effects out of Asian cinema and absurd levels of destruction and a skewed sense of humour and Spectacle and things blowing up and people getting kicked.

It is most especially about THINGS BLOWING UP and PEOPLE GETTING KICKED.

It is about humanoid Clone Things made out of engine oil and broccoli being smacked to death by a woman with a guitar.

NEXTWAVE. Healing America by beating people up.

-- W




Cover to Marvel Milestones Special: Bloodstone; X-51 & Captain Marvel II

# NEXT ISSUE

## MICHAEL LARK

## JOSS WHEDON

# MARVEL SPOTLIGHT LETTERS PAGE

First things first, a few orders of business:

If you'd like to submit an essay for Fan's Soapbox at the Bullpen Bulletins, there are a few things we're looking for! First, we'd like you to stick with the theme: What I love about my Marvel Comics! Maybe it's a particular story that you read that affected you in a positive way. Perhaps it's an era, creator, or long-running title from Marvel history that holds your fancy. Or possibly it's something that Marvel is doing today that you think is innovative and worth noting.

Put in your best effort at eloquence, make sure it's no longer than 500 words, and understand that it may be edited for publication. Marvel Comics have the best fans in all of comics, and if you're one of 'em, we'll be proud to show your thoughts off to the world! Send your missives to: trades@marvel.com

Don't forget, we're still looking for letters to fill this page! Submit questions related to the creators we cover, as well as suggestions or comments about the coverage we're delivering to you in Spotlight. You already know the email address, but if you would like to send a letter, please mail your correspondence to:

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT
C/O MARVEL COMICS
417 5TH AVE.
NEW YORK, NY 10016

Also, we're still looking for an interesting and catchy moniker for our letters page. We're just plain flummoxed trying to think of one on our own, so get cracking on solving this conundrum quickly! Maybe you'll stumble on the right one!

Finally, you may have already noticed the most dominant visual feature of this page. We're running out of real estate as it is, so we'll leave the specifics for later. But I just have one thing left to say, and it's a Brazen Baptism of Bullpen Battiness:

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